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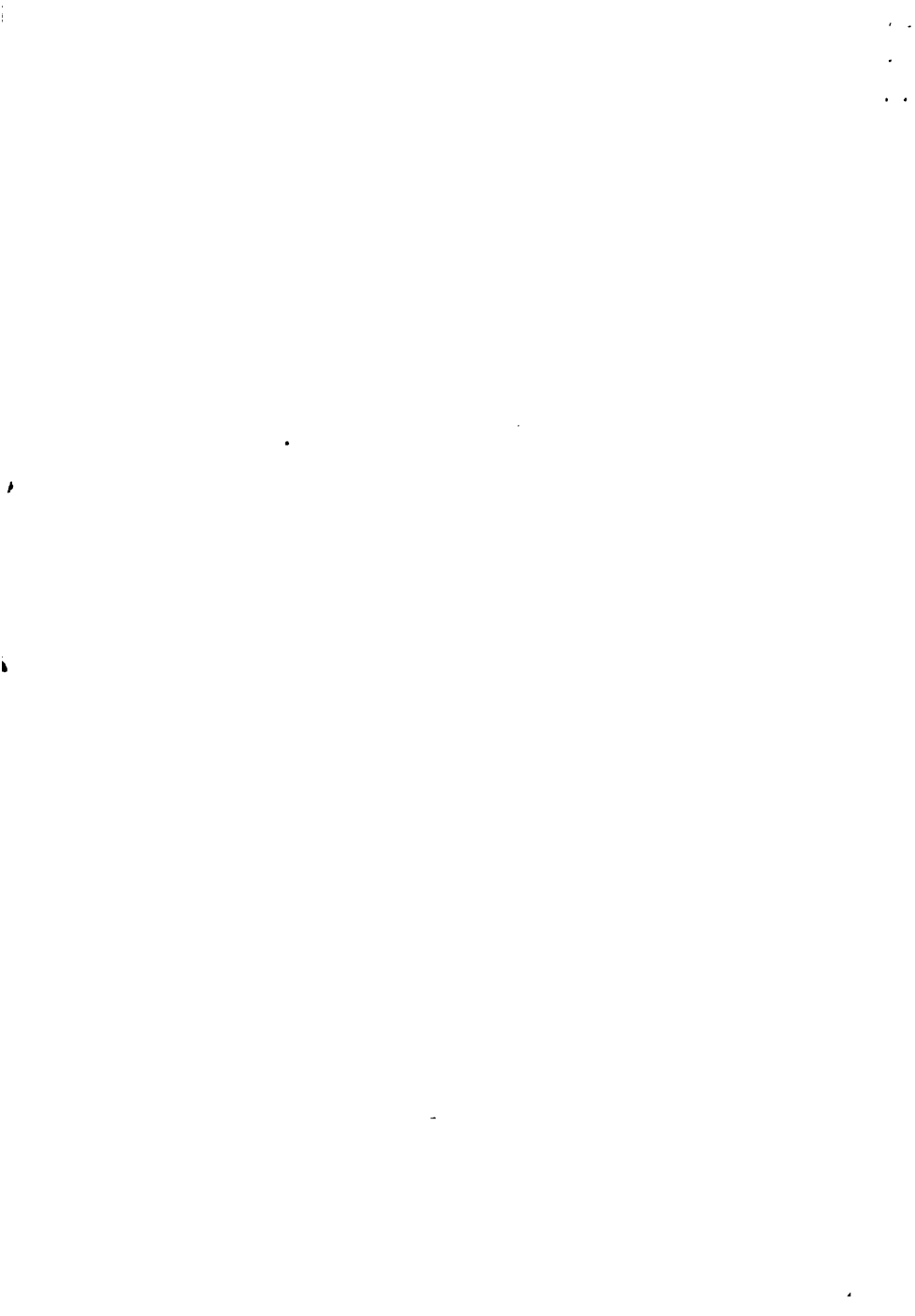
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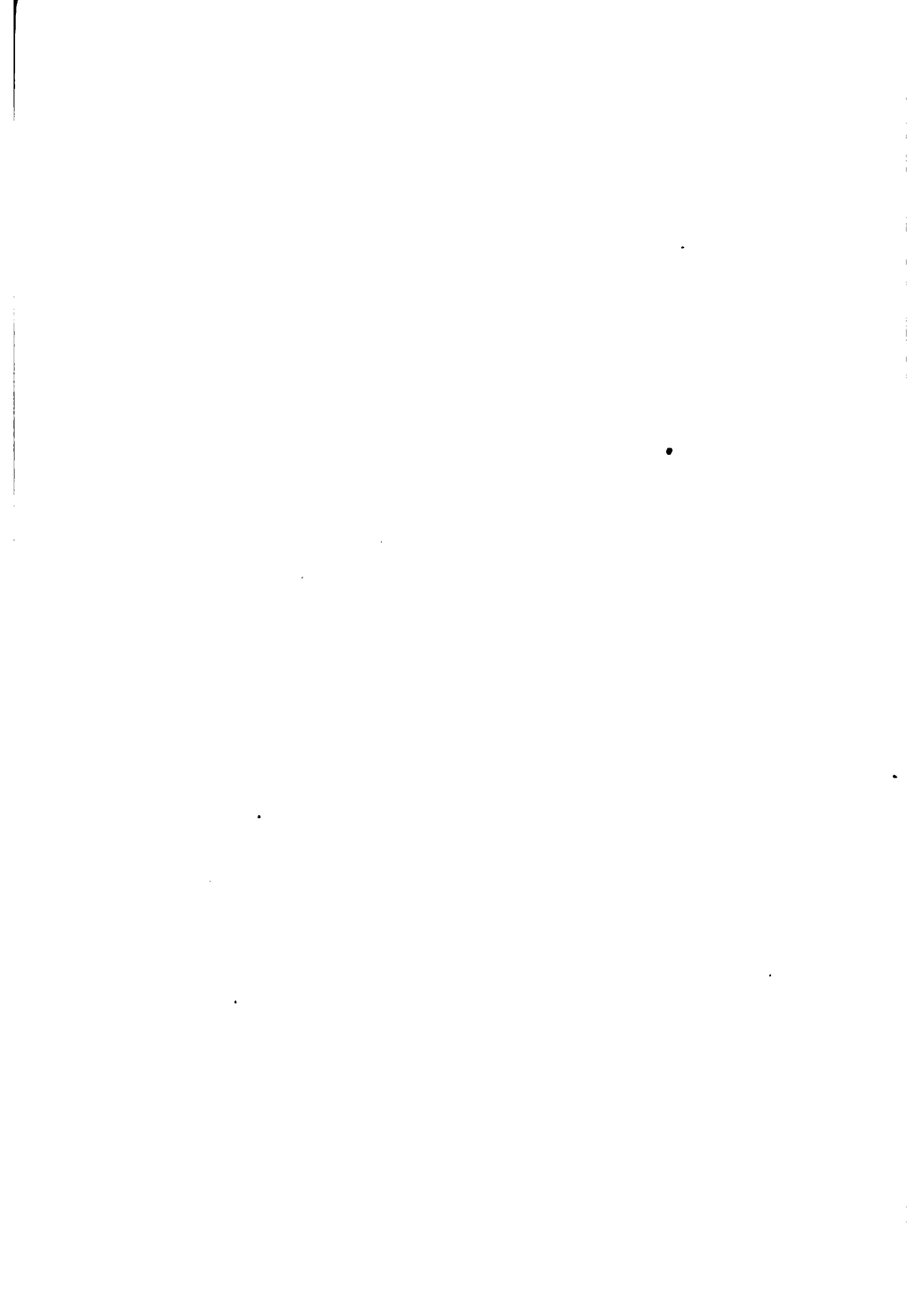
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COLLECTED POEMS

COLLECTED POEMS

1901—1918

BY

WALTER DE LA MARE



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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BOOK ONE

**POEMS: 1906
TO HENRY NEWBOLT**

LYRICAL POEMS

SHADOW

EVEN the beauty of the rose doth cast,
When its bright, fervid noon is past,
A still and lengthening shadow in the dust,
Till darkness come
And take its strange dream home.

The transient bubbles of the water paint
'Neath their frail arch a shadow faint;
The golden nimbus of the windowed saint,
Till shine the stars,
Casts pale and trembling bars.

The loveliest thing earth hath, a shadow hath,
A dark and livelong hint of death,
Haunting it ever till its last faint breath.
Who, then, may tell
The beauty of heaven's shadowless asphodel?

UNREGARDING

PUT by thy days like withered flowers
In twilight hidden away:
Memory shall upbuild thee bowers
Sweeter than they.

Hoard not from swiftness of thy stream
The shallowest cruse of tears:
Pools still as heaven shall lovelier dream
In future years.

Squander thy love as she that flings
Her soul away on night;
Lovely are love's far echoings,
Height unto height.

O, make no compact with the sun,
No compact with the moon!
Night falls full-cloaked, and light is gone
Sudden and soon.

THEY TOLD ME

THEY told me Pan was dead, but I
Oft marvelled who it was that sang
Down the green valleys languidly
Where the grey elder-thickets hang.

Sometimes I thought it was a bird
My soul had charged with sorcery;
Sometimes it seemed my own heart heard
Inland the sorrow of the sea.

But even where the primrose sets
The seal of her pale loveliness,
I found amid the violets
Tears of an antique bitterness.

SORCERY

“WHAT voice is that I hear
Crying across the pool? ”
“ It is the voice of Pan you hear,
Crying his sorceries shrill and clear,
In the twilight dim and cool.”

“ What song is it he sings,
Echoing from afar;
While the sweet swallow bends her wings,
Filling the air with twitterings,
Beneath the brightening star?”

The woodman answered me,
His faggot on his back: —
“ Seek not the face of Pan to see;
Flee from his clear note summoning thee
To darkness deep and black! ”

“ He dwells in thickest shade,
Piping his notes forlorn
Of sorrow never to be allayed;
Turn from his coverts sad
Of twilight unto morn! ”

SORCERY

The woodman passed away
Along the forest path;
His ax shone keen and grey
In the last beams of day:
And all was still as death: —

Only Pan singing sweet
Out of Earth's fragrant shade;
I dreamed his eyes to meet,
And found but shadow laid
Before my tired feet.

Comes no more dawn to me,
Nor bird of open skies.
Only his woods' deep gloom I see
Till, at the end of all, shall rise,
Afar and tranquilly,
Death's stretching sea.

THE CHILDREN OF STARE

WINTER is fallen early
On the house of Stare;
Birds in reverberating flocks
Haunt its ancestral box;
Bright are the plenteous berries
In clusters in the air.

Still is the fountain's music,
The dark pool icy still,
Whereupon a small and sanguine sun
Floats in a mirror on,
Into a West of crimson,
From a South of daffodil.

'Tis strange to see young children
In such a wintry house;
Like rabbits' on the frozen snow
Their tell-tale footprints go;
Their laughter rings like timbrels
'Neath evening ominous:

Their small and heightened faces
Like wine-red winter buds;

THE CHILDREN OF STARE

Their frolic bodies gentle as
Flakes in the air that pass,
Frail as the twirling petal
From the briar of the woods.

Above them silence lours,
Still as an arctic sea;
Light fails; night falls; the wintry moon
Glitters; the crocus soon
Will ope grey and distracted
On earth's austerity:

Thick mystery, wild peril,
Law like an iron rod: —
Yet sport they on in Spring's attire,
Each with his tiny fire
Blown to a core of ardour
By the awful breath of God.

AGE

THIS ugly old crone —
Every beauty she had
When a maid, when a maid.
Her beautiful eyes,
Too youthful, too wise,
Seemed ever to come
To so lightless a home,
Cold and dull as a stone.
And her cheeks — who would guess
Cheeks cadaverous as this
Once with colours were gay
As the flower on its spray?
Who would ever believe
Aught could bring one to grieve
So much as to make
Lips bent for love's sake
So thin and so grey?
O Youth, come away!
As she asks in her lone,
This old, desolate crone.
She loves us no more;
She is too old to care
For the charms that of yore
Made her body so fair.

AGE

Past repining, past care,
She lives but to bear
One or two fleeting years
Earth's indifference: her tears
Have lost now their heat;
Her hands and her feet
Now shake but to be
Shed as leaves from a tree;
And her poor heart beats on
Like a sea — the storm gone.

THE GLIMPSE

ART thou asleep? or have thy wings
Wearied of my unchanging skies?
Or, haply, is it fading dreams
Are in my eyes?

Not even an echo in my heart
Tells me the courts thy feet trod last,
Bare as a leafless wood it is,
The summer past.

My inmost mind is like a book
The reader dulls with lassitude,
Wherein the same old lovely words
Sound poor and rude.

Yet through this vapid surface, I
Seem to see old-time deeps; I see,
Past the dark painting of the hour,
Life's ecstasy.

Only a moment; as when day
Is set, and in the shade of night,
Through all the clouds that compassed her,
Stoops into sight

THE GLIMPSE

Pale, changeless, everlasting Dian,
Gleams on the prone Endymion,
Troubles the dulness of his dreams:
And then is gone.

REMEMBRANCE

THE sky was like a waterdrop
In shadow of a thorn,
Clear, tranquil, beautiful,
Dark, forlorn.

Lightning along its margin ran;
A rumour of the sea
Rose in profundity and sank
Into infinity.

Lofty and few the elms, the stars
In the vast boughs most bright;
I stood a dreamer in a dream
In the unstirring night.

Not wonder, worship, not even peace
Seemed in my heart to be:
Only the memory of one,
Of all most dead to me.

TREACHERY

SHE had amid her ringlets bound
Green leaves to rival their dark hue;
How could such locks with beauty bound
 Dry up their dew,
 Wither them through and through?

She had within her dark eyes lit
Sweet fires to burn all doubt away;
Yet did those fires, in darkness lit,
 Burn but a day,
 Not even till twilight stay.

She had within a dusk of words
A vow in simple splendour set;
How, in the memory of such words,
 Could she forget
 That vow — the soul of it?

IN VAIN

I KNOCKED upon thy door ajar,
While yet the woods with buds were grey;
Nought but a little child I heard
 Warbling at break of day.

I knocked when June had lured her rose
To mask the sharpness of its thorn;
Knocked yet again, heard only yet
 Thee singing of the morn.

The frail convolvulus had wreathed
Its cup, but the faint flush of eve
Lingered upon thy Western wall;
 Thou hadst no word to give.

Once yet I came; the winter stars
Above thy house wheeled wildly bright;
Footsore I stood before thy door —
 Wide open into night.

THE MIRACLE

WHO beckons the green ivy up
Its solitary tower of stone?
What spirit lures the bindweed's cup
Unfaltering on?
Calls even the starry lichen to climb
By agelong inches endless Time?

Who bids the hollyhock uplift
Her rod of fast-sealed buds on high;
Fling wide her petals — silent, swift,
Lovely to the sky?
Since as she kindled, so she will fade,
Flower above flower in squalor laid.

Ever the heavy billow rears
All its sea-length in green, hushed wall;
But totters as the shore it nears,
Foams to its fall;
Where was its mark? on what vain quest
Rose that great water from its rest?

So creeps ambition on; so climb
Man's vaunting thoughts. He, set on high,
Forgets his birth, small space, brief time,
That he shall die;

LYRICAL POEMS

Dreams blindly in his dark, still air;
Consumes his strength; strips himself bare;

Rejects delight, ease, pleasure, hope,
Seeking in vain, but seeking yet,
Past earthly promise, earthly scope,
On one aim set:
As if, like Chaucer's child, he thought
All but "O Alma!" nought.

KEEP INNOCENCY

LIKE an old battle, youth is wild
With bugle and spear, and counter cry,
Fanfare and drummery, yet a child
Dreaming of that sweet chivalry,
The piercing terror cannot see.

He, with a mild and serious eye
Along the azure of the years,
Sees the sweet pomp sweep hurtling by;
But he sees not death's blood and tears,
Sees not the plunging of the spears.

And all the strident horror of
Horse and rider, in red defeat,
Is only music fine enough
To lull him into slumber sweet
In fields where ewe and lambkin bleat.

O, if with such simplicity
Himself take arms and suffer war;
With beams his targe shall gilded be,
Though in the thickening gloom be far
The steadfast light of any star!

LYRICAL POEMS

Though hoarse War's eagle on him perch,
Quickened with guilty lightnings — there
It shall in vain for terror search,
Where a child's eyes beneath bloody hair
Gaze purely through the dingy air.

And when the wheeling rout is spent,
Though in the heaps of slain he lie;
Or lonely in his last content;
Quenchless shall burn in secrecy
The flame Death knows his victors by.

THE PHANTOM

WILT thou never come again,
Beauteous one?
Yet the woods are green and dim,
Yet the birds' deluding cry
Echoes in the hollow sky,
Yet the falling waters brim
The clear pool which thou wast fain
To paint thy lovely cheek upon,
Beauteous one!

I may see the thorny rose
Stir and wake
The dark dewdrop on her gold;
But thy secret will she keep
Half-divulged — yet all untold,
Since a child's heart woke from sleep.

The faltering sunbeam fades and goes;
The night-bird whistles in the brake;
The willows quake;
Utter darkness walls; the wind
Sighs no more.
Yet it seems the silence yearns
But to catch thy fleeting foot;
Yet the wandering glowworm burns

LYRICAL POEMS

Lest her lamp should light thee not —
Thee whom I shall never find;
Though thy shadow lean before,
Thou thyself return'st no more —
Never more.

All the world's woods, tree o'er tree,
Come to nought.
Birds, flowers, beasts, how transient they,
Angels of a flying day.
Love is quenched; dreams drown in sleep;
Ruin nods along the deep:
Only thou immortally
Hauntest on
This poor earth in Time's flux caught;
Hauntest on, pursued, unwon,
Phantom child of memory,
Beauteous one!

VOICES

WHO is it calling by the darkened river
Where the moss lies smooth and deep,
And the dark trees lean unmoving arms,
Silent and vague in sleep,
And the bright-heeled constellations pass
In splendour through the gloom;
Who is it calling o'er the darkened river
In music, "Come!" ?

Who is it wandering in the summer meadows
Where the children stoop and play
In the green faint-scented flowers, spinning
The guileless hours away?
Who touches their bright hair? who puts
A wind-shell to each cheek,
Whispering betwixt its breathing silences,
"Seek! seek!" ?

Who is it watching in the gathering twilight
When the curfew bird hath flown
On eager wings, from song to silence,
To its darkened nest alone?
Who takes for brightening eyes the stars,
For locks the still moonbeam,
Sighs through the dews of evening peacefully
Falling, "Dream!" ?

THULE

IF thou art sweet as they are sad
Who on the shores of Time's salt sea
Watch on the dim horizon fade
Ships bearing love to night and thee;

If past all beacons Hope hath lit
In the dark wanderings of the deep
They who unwilling traverse it
Dream not till dawn unseal their sleep;

Ah, cease not in thy winds to mock
Us, who yet wake, but cannot see
Thy distant shores; who at each shock
Of the waves' onset faint for thee!

THE BIRTHNIGHT: TO F.

DEAREST, it was a night
That in its darkness rocked Orion's stars;
A sighing wind ran faintly white
Along the willows, and the cedar boughs
Laid their wide hands in stealthy peace across
The starry silence of their antique moss:
No sound save rushing air
Cold, yet all sweet with Spring,
And in thy mother's arms, couched weeping there,
 Thou, lovely thing.

THE DEATH-DREAM

WHO, now, put dreams into thy slumbering
mind?

Who, with bright Fear's lean taper, crossed a hand
Athwart its beam, and stooping, truth maligned,
Spake so thy spirit speech should understand,
And with a dread "He's dead!" awaked a peal
Of frenzied bells along the vacant ways
Of thy poor earthly heart; waked thee to steal,
Like dawn distraught upon unhappy days,
To prove nought, nothing? Was it Time's large
voice

Out of the inscrutable future whispered so?
Or but the horror of a little noise
Earth wakes at dead of night? Or does Love know
When his sweet wings weary and droop, and even
In sleep cries audibly a shrill remorse?
Or, haply, was it I who out of dream
Stole but a little where shadows course,
Called back to thee across the eternal stream?

"WHERE IS THY VICTORY?"

NONE, none can tell where I shall be
When the unclean earth covers me;
Only in surety if thou cry
Where my perplexèd ashes lie,
Know, 'tis but death's necessity
That keeps my tongue from answering thee.

Even if no more my shadow may
Lean for a moment in thy day;
No more the whole earth lighten, as if,
Thou near, it had nought else to give:
Surely 'tis but Heaven's strategy
To prove death immortality.

Yet should I sleep — and no more dream,
Sad would the last awakening seem,
If my cold heart, with love once hot,
Had thee in sleep remembered not:
How could I wake to find that I
Had slept alone, yet easefully?

Or should in sleep glad visions come:
Sick, in an alien land, for home
Would be my eyes in their bright beam;

LYRICAL POEMS

Awake, we know 'tis not a dream;
Asleep, some devil in the mind
Might truest thoughts with false enwind.

Life is a mockery if death
Have the least power men say it hath.
As to a hound that mewing waits,
Death opens, and shuts to, his gates;
Else even dry bones might rise and say, —
“ 'Tis ye are dead and laid away.”

Innocent children out of nought
Build up a universe of thought,
And out of silence fashion Heaven:
So, dear, is this poor dying even,
Seeing thou shalt be touched, heard, seen,
Better than when dust stood between.

FOREBODING

THOU canst not see him standing by —
Time — with a popped hand
Stealing thy youth's simplicity,
Even as falls unceasingly
His waning sand.

He will pluck thy childish roses, as
Summer from her bush
Strips all the loveliness that was;
Even to the silence evening has
Thy laughter hush.

Thy locks too faint for earthly gold,
The meekness of thine eyes,
He will darken and dim, and to his fold
Drive, 'gainst the night, thy stainless, old
Innocencies;

Thy simple words confuse and mar,
Thy tenderest thoughts delude,
Draw a long cloud athwart thy star,
Still with loud timbrels heaven's far
Faint interlude.

LYRICAL POEMS

Thou canst not see; I see, dearest;
O, then, yet patient be,
Though love refuse thy heart all rest,
Though even love wax angry, lest
Love should lose *thee*?

VAIN FINDING

EVER before my face there went
Betwixt earth's buds and me
A beauty beyond earth's content,
A hope — half memory:
Till in the woods one evening —
Ah! eyes as dark as they,
Fastened on mine unwontedly,
Grey, and dear heart, how grey!

NAPOLEON

“WHAT is the world, O soldiers?

It is I:

I, this incessant snow,

 This northern sky;

Soldiers, this solitude

 Through which we go

 Is I.”

ENGLAND.

NO lovelier hills than thine have laid
My tired thoughts to rest:
No peace of lovelier valleys made
Like peace within my breast.

Thine are the woods whereto my soul,
Out of the noontide beam,
Flees for a refuge green and cool
And tranquil as a dream.

Thy breaking seas like trumpets peal;
Thy clouds — how oft have I
Watched their bright towers of silence steal
Into infinity!

My heart within me faints to roam
In thought even far from thee:
Thine be the grave whereto I come,
And thine my darkness be.

TRUCE

FAR inland here Death's pinions mocked the roar
Of English seas;
We sleep to wake no more,
Hushed, and at ease;
Till sound a trump, shore on to echoing shore,
Rouse from a peace, unwonted then to war,
Us and our enemies.

EVENING

WHEN twilight darkens, and one by one,
The sweet birds to their nests have gone;
When to green banks the glow-worms bring
Pale lamps to brighten evening;
Then stirs in his thick sleep the owl
Through the dewy air to prow.

Hawking the meadows swiftly he flits,
While the small mouse atrembling sits
With tiny eye of fear upcast
Until his brooding shape be past,
Hiding her where the moonbeams beat,
Casting black shadows in the wheat.

Now all is still: the field-man is
Lapped deep in slumbering silentness.
Not a leaf stirs, but clouds on high
Pass in dim flocks across the sky,
Puffed by a breeze too light to move
Aught but these wakeful sheep above.

O what an arch of light now spans
These fields by night no longer Man's!

LYRICAL POEMS

**Their ancient Master is abroad,
Walking beneath the moonlight cold:
His presence is the stillness, He
Fills earth with wonder and mystery.**

NIGHT

ALL from the light of the sweet moon
Tired men lie now abed;
Actionless, full of visions, soon
Vanishing, soon sped.

The starry night aflock with beams
Of crystal light scarce stirs:
Only its birds — the cocks, the streams,
Call 'neath heaven's wanderers.

All silent; all hearts still;
Love, cunning, fire fallen low:
When faint morn straying on the hill
Sighs, and his soft airs flow.

THE UNIVERSE

I HEARD a little child beneath the stars
Talk as he ran along
To some sweet riddle in his mind that seemed
A-tiptoe into song.

In his dark eyes lay a wild universe, —
Wild forests, peaks, and crests;
Angels and fairies, giants, wolves and he
Were that world's only guests.

Elsewhere was home and mother, his warm bed: —
Now, only God alone
Could, armed with all His power and wisdom, make
Earths richer than his own.

O Man! — thy dreams, thy passions, hopes,
desires! —
He in his pity keep
A homely bed where love may lull a child's
Fond Universe asleep!

GLORIA MUNDI

UPON a bank, easeless with knobs of gold,
Beneath a canopy of noonday smoke,
I saw a measureless Beast, morose and bold,
With eyes like one from filthy dreams awake,
Who stares upon the daylight in despair
For very terror of the nothing there.

This beast in one flat hand clutched vulture-wise
A glittering image of itself in jet,
And with the other groped about its eyes
To drive away the dreams that pestered it;
And never ceased its coils to toss and beat
The mire encumbering its feeble feet.

Sharp was its hunger, though continually
It seemed a cud of stones to ruminate,
And often like a dog let glittering lie
This meatless fare, its foolish gaze to sate;
Once more convulsively to stoop its jaw,
Or seize the morsel with an envious paw.

Indeed, it seemed a hidden enemy
Must lurk within the clouds above that bank,
It strained so wildly its pale, stubborn eye,
To pierce its own foul vapours dim and dank;

LYRICAL POEMS

Till, wearied out, it raved in wrath and foam,
Daring that Nought Invisible to come.

Ay, and it seemed some strange delight to find
In this unmeaning din, till, suddenly,
As if it heard a rumour on the wind,
Or far away its freer children cry,
Lifting its face made-quiet, there it stayed,
Till died the echo its own rage had made.

That place alone was barren where it lay;
Flowers bloomed beyond, utterly sweet and fair;
And even its own dull heart might think to stay
In livelong thirst of a clear river there,
Flowing from unseen hills to unheard seas,
Through a still vale of yew and almond trees.

And then I spied in the lush green below
Its tortured belly, One, like silver, pale,
With fingers closed upon a rope of straw,
That bound the Beast, squat neck to hoary tail;
Lonely in all that verdure faint and deep,
He watched the monster as a shepherd sheep.

I marvelled at the power, strength, and rage
Of this poor creature in such slavery bound;
Tettered with worms of fear; forlorn with age;
Its blue wing-stumps stretched helpless on the
ground;
While twilight faded into darkness deep,
And he who watched it piped its pangs asleep.

IDLENESS

I SAW old Idleness, fat, with great cheeks
Puffed to the huge circumference of a sigh,
But past all tinge of apples long ago.
His boyish fingers twiddled up and down
The filthy remnant of a cup of physic
That thicked in odour all the while he stayed.
His eyes were sad as fishes that swim up
And stare upon an element not theirs
Through a thin skin of shrewish water, then
Turn on a languid fin, and dip down, down,
Into unplumbed, vast, oozy deeps of dream.
His stomach was his master, and proclaimed it;
And never were such meagre puppets made
The slaves of such a tyrant, as his thoughts
Of that obese epitome of ills.
Trussed up he sat, the mockery of himself;
And when upon the wan green of his eye
I marked the gathering lustre of a tear,
Thought I myself must weep, until I caught
A grey, smug smile of satisfaction smirch
His pallid features at his misery.
And laugh did I, to see the little snares
He had set for pests to vex him: his great feet
Prisoned in greater boots; so narrow a stool

LYRICAL POEMS

To seat such elephantine parts as his;
Ay, and the book he read, a Hebrew Bible;
And, to incite a gross and backward wit,
An old, crabbed, wormed, Greek dictionary; and
A foxy Ovid bound in dappled calf.

GOLIATH

STILL as a mountain with dark pines and sun
He stood between the armies, and his shout
Rolled from the empyrean above the host:
"Bid any little flea ye have come forth,
And wince at death upon my finger-nail!"
He turned his large-boned face; and all his steel
Tossed into beams the lustre of the noon;
And all the shaggy horror of his locks
Rustled like locusts in a field of corn.
The meagre pupil of his shameless eye
Moved like a cormorant over a glassy sea.
He stretched his limbs, and laughed into the air,
To feel the groaning sinews of his breast,
And the long gush of his swollen arteries pause:
And, nodding, wheeled, towering in all his height.
Then, like a wind that hushes, gazed and saw
Down, down, far down upon the untroubled green
A shepherd-boy that swung a little sling.
Goliath shut his lids to drive that mote,
Which vexed the eastern azure of his eye,
Out of his vision; and stared down again.
Yet stood the youth there, ruddy in the flare
Of his vast shield, nor spake, nor quailed, gazed up,
As one might scan a mountain to be scaled.

LYRICAL POEMS

Then, as it were, a voice unearthly still
Cried in the cavern of his bristling ear,
"His name is Death!" . . . And, like the flush
That dyes Sahara to its lifeless verge,
His brows' bright brass flamed into sudden crimson;
And his great spear leapt upward, lightning-like,
Shaking a dreadful thunder in the air;
Spun betwixt earth and sky, bright as a berg
That hoards the sunlight in a myriad spires,
Crashed: and struck echo through an army's heart.
Then paused Goliath, and stared down again.
And fleet-foot Fear from rolling orbs perceived
Steadfast, unharmed, a stooping shepherd-boy
Frowning upon the target of his face.
And wrath tossed suddenly up once more his hand;
And a deep groan grieved all his strength in him.
He breathed; and, lost in dazzling darkness,
prayed —
Besought his reins, his gloating gods, his youth:
And turned to smite what he no more could see.
Then sped the singing pebble-messenger,
The chosen of the Lord from Israel's brooks,
Fleet to its mark, and hollowed a light path
Down to the appalling Babel of his brain.
And like the smoke of dreaming Souffrière
Dust rose in cloud, spread wide, slow silted down
Softly all softly on his armour's blaze.

CHARACTERS FROM SHAKESPEARE

FALSTAFF

TWAS in a tavern that with old age stooped
And leaned rheumatic rafters o'er his head —
A blowzed, prodigious man, which talked, and
stared,
And rolled, as if with purpose, a small eye
Like a sweet Cupid in a cask of wine.
I could not view his fatness for his soul,
Which peeped like harmless lightnings and was
gone;
As haps to voyagers of the summer air.
And when he laughed, Time trickled down those
beams,
As in a glass; and when in self-defence
He puffed that paunch, and wagged that huge,
Greek head,
Nosed like a Punchinello, then it seemed
An hundred widows swept in his small voice,
Now tenor, and now bass of drummy war.
He smiled, compact of loam, this orchard man;
Mused like a midnight, webbed with moonbeam
snares
Of flitting Love; woke — and a King he stood,
Whom all the world hath in sheer jest refused
For helpless laughter's sake. And then, forbend!
Bacchus and Jove reared vast Olympus there;

CHARACTERS FROM SHAKESPEARE

And Pan leaned leering from Promethean eyes.

“Lord!” sighed his aspect, weeping o’er the jest,

“What simple mouse brought such a mountain
forth?”

MACBETH

ROSE, like dim battlements, the hills and reared
Steep crags into the fading primrose sky;
But in the desolate valleys fell small rain,
Mingled with drifting cloud. I saw one come,
Like the fierce passion of that vacant place,
His face turned glittering to the evening sky;
His eyes, like grey despair, fixed satelessly
On the still, rainy turrets of the storm;
And all his armour in a haze of blue.
He held no sword, bare was his hand and clenched,
As if to hide the inextinguishable blood
Murder had painted there. And his wild mouth
Seemed spouting echoes of deluded thoughts.
Around his head, like vipers all distort,
His locks shook, heavy-laden, at each stride.
If fire may burn invisible to the eye;
O, if despair strive everlastingly;
Then haunted here the creature of despair,
Fanning and fanning flame to lick upon
A soul still childish in a blackened hell.

BANQUO

WHAT dost thou here far from thy native place?
What piercing influences of heaven have stirred
Thy heart's last mansion all-corruptible to wake,
To move, and in the sweets of wine and fire
Sit tempting madness with unholy eyes?
Begone, thou shuddering, pale anomaly!
The dark presses without on yew and thorn;
Stoops now the owl upon her lonely quest;
The pomp runs high here, and our beauteous
 women
Seek no cold witness — O, let murder cry,
Too shrill for human ear, only to God.
Come not in power to wreak so wild a vengeance!
Thou knowest not now the limit of man's heart;
He is beyond thy knowledge. Gaze not then,
Horror enthroned lit with insanest light!

MERCUTIO

ALONG an avenue of almond-trees
Came three girls chattering of their sweethearts
three.

And lo! Mercutio, with Byronic ease,
Out of his philosophic eye cast all
A mere flowered twig of thought, whereat —
Three hearts fell still as when an air dies out
And Venus falters lonely o'er the sea.
But when within the further mist of bloom
His step and form were hid, the smooth child Ann
Said, "La, and what eyes he had!" and Lucy said,
"How sad a gentleman!" and Katherine,
"I wonder, now, what mischief he was at."
And these three also April hid away,
Leaving the Spring faint with Mercutio.

JULIET'S NURSE

IN old-world nursery vacant now of children,
With posied walls, familiar, fair, demure,
And facing southward o'er romantic streets,
Sits yet and gossips winter's dark away
One gloomy, vast, glossy, and wise, and sly:
And at her side a cherried country cousin.
Her tongue claps ever like a ram's sweet bell;
There's not a name but calls a tale to mind —
Some marrowy patty of farce or melodram;
There's not a soldier but hath babes in view;
There's not on earth what minds not of the midwife:
"O, widowhood that left me still espoused!"
Beauty she sighs o'er, and she sighs o'er gold;
Gold will buy all things, even a sweet husband,
Else only Heaven is left and — farewell youth!
Yet, strangely, in that money-haunted head,
The sad, gemmed crucifix and incense blue
Is childhood once again. Her memory
Is like an ant-hill which a twig disturbs,
But twig stilled never. And to see her face,
Broad with sleek homely beams; her babied hands,
Ever like 'lighting doves, and her small eyes —
Blue wells a-twinkle, arch and lewd and pious —
To darken all sudden into Stygian gloom,

JULIET'S NURSE

And paint disaster with uplifted whites,
Is life's epitome. She prates and prates —
A waterbrook of words o'er twelve small pebbles.
And when she dies — some grey, long, summer
evening,
When the bird shouts of childhood through the
dusk,
'Neath night's faint tapers — then her body shall
Lie stiff with silks of sixty thrifty years.

IAGO

A DARK lean face, a narrow, slanting eye,
Whose deeps of blackness one pale taper's beam
Haunts with a fitting madness of desire;
A heart whose cinder at the breath of passion
Glow to a momentary core of heat
Almost beyond indifference to endure:
So parched Iago frets his life away.
His scorn works ever in a brain whose wit
This world hath fools too many and gross to seek.
Ever to live incredibly alone,
Masked, shivering, deadly, with a simple Moor
Of idiot gravity, and one pale flower
Whose chill would quench in everlasting peace
His soul's unmeasured flame — O paradox!
Might he but learn the trick! — to wear her heart
One fragile hour of heedless innocence,
And then, farewell, and the incessant grave.
"O fool! O villain!" — 'tis the shuttlecock
Wit never leaves at rest. It is his fate
To be a needle in a world of hay,
Where honour is the flattery of the fool;
Sin, a tame bauble; lies, a tiresome jest;
Virtue, a silly, whitewashed block of wood
For words to fell. Ah! but the secret lacking,

IAGO

The secret of the child, the bird, the night,
Faded, flouted, bespattered, in days so far
Hate cannot bitter them, nor wrath deny;
Else were this Desdemona. . . . Why!
Woman a harlot is, and life a nest
Fouled by long ages of forked fools. And God —
Iago deals not with a tale so dull:
To have made the world! Fie on thee, Artisan!

IMOGEN

EVEN she too dead! all languor on her brow,
All mute humanity's last simpleness,—
And yet the roses in her cheeks unfallen!
Can death haunt silence with a silver sound?
Can death, that hushes all music to a close,
Pluck one sweet wire scarce-audible that trembles,
As if a little child, called Purity,
Sang heedlessly on of his dear Imogen?
Surely if some young flowers of Spring were put
Into the tender hollow of her heart,
'Twould faintly answer, trembling in their petals.
Poise but a wild bird's feather, it will stir
On lips that even in silence wear the badge
Only of truth. Let but a cricket wake,
And sing of home, and bid her lids unseal
The unspeakable hospitality of her eyes.
O childless soul — call once her husband's name!
And even if indeed from these green hills
Of England, far, her spirit flits forlorn,
Back to its youthful mansion it will turn,
Back to the floods of sorrow these sweet locks
Yet heavy bear in drops; and Night shall see
Unwearying as her stars still Imogen,
Pausing 'twixt death and life on one hushed word.

POLONIUS

THERE haunts in Time's bare house an active
ghost,
Enamoured of his name, Polonius.
He moves small fingers much, and all his speech
Is like a sampler of precisest words,
Set in the pattern of a simpleton.
His mirth floats eerily down chill corridors;
His sigh — it is a sound that loves a keyhole;
His tenderness a faint court-tarnished thing;
His wisdom prates as from a wicker cage;
His very belly is a pompous nought;
His eye a page that hath forgot his errand.
Yet in his brain — his spiritual brain —
Lies hid a child's demure, small, silver whistle
Which, to his horror, God blows, unawares,
And sets men staring. It is sad to think,
Might he but don indeed thin flesh and blood,
And pace important to Law's inmost room,
He would see, much marvelling, one immensely
wise,
Named Bacon, who, at sound of his youth's step,
Would turn and call him Cousin — for the likeness.

OPHELIA

THERE runs a crisscross pattern of small leaves
Espalier, in a fading summer air,
And there Ophelia walks, an azure flower,
Whom wind, and snowflakes, and the sudden rain
Of love's wild skies have purified to heaven.
There is a beauty past all weeping now
In that sweet, crooked mouth, that vacant smile;
Only a lonely grey in those mad eyes,
Which never on earth shall learn their loneliness.
And when amid startled birds she sings lament,
Mocking in hope the long voice of the stream,
It seems her heart's lute hath a broken string.
Ivy she hath, that to old ruin clings;
And rosemary, that sees remembrance fade;
And pansies, deeper than the gloom of dreams;
But ah! if utterable, would this earth
Remain the base, unreal thing it is?
Better be out of sight of peering eyes;
Out — out of hearing of all-useless words,
Spoken of tedious tongues in heedless ears.
And lest, at last, the world should learn heart-
secrets;
Lest that sweet wolf from some dim thicket steal;
Better the glassy horror of the stream.

HAMLET

UMBRAGEOUS cedars murmuring symphonies
Stooped in late twilight o'er dark Denmark's

Prince:

He sat, his eyes companioned with dream —
Lustrous large eyes that held the world in view
As some entranced child's a puppet show.
Darkness gave birth to the all-trembling stars,
And a far roar of long-drawn cataracts,
Flooding immeasurable night with sound.
He sat so still, his very thoughts took wing,
And, lightest Ariels, the stillness haunted
With midge-like measures; but, at last, even they
Sank 'neath the influences of his night.
The sweet dust shed faint perfume in the gloom;
Through all wild space the stars' bright arrows fell
On the lone Prince — the troubled son of man —
On Time's dark waters in unearthly trouble:
Then, as the roar increased, and one fair tower
Of cloud took sky and stars with majesty,
He rose, his face a parchment of old age,
Sorrow hath scribbled o'er, and o'er, and o'er.



SONNETS

THE HAPPY ENCOUNTER

I SAW sweet Poetry turn troubled eyes
On shaggy Science nosing in the grass,
For by that way poor Poetry must pass
On her long pilgrimage to Paradise.
He snuffled, grunted, squealed; perplexed by flies,
Parched, weatherworn, and near of sight, alas,
From peering close where very little was
In dens secluded from the open skies.

But Poetry in bravery went down,
And called his name, soft, clear, and fearlessly;
Stooped low, and stroked his muzzle overgrown;
Refreshed his drought with dew; wiped pure and
free

His eyes: and lo! laughed loud for joy to see
In those grey deeps the azure of her own.

APRIL

COME, then, with showers; I love thy cloudy face
Gilded with splendour of the sunbeam thro'
The heedless glory of thy locks. I know
The arch, sweet languor of thy fleeting grace,
The windy lovebeams of thy dwelling-place,
Thy dim dells where in azure bluebells blow,
The brimming rivers where thy lightnings go
Harmless and full and swift from race to race.

Thou takest all young hearts captive with thine
eyes;

At rumour of thee the tongues of children ring
Louder than bees; the golden poplars rise
Like trumps of peace; and birds, on homeward
wing,

Fly mocking echoes shrill along the skies,
Above the waves' grave diapasoning.

SEA-MAGIC

To R. I.

MY heart faints in me for the distant sea.
The roar of London is the roar of ire
The lion utters in his old desire
For Libya out of dim captivity.
The long bright silver of Cheapside I see,
Her gilded weathercocks on roof and spire
Exulting eastward in the western fire;
All things recall one heart-sick memory: —

Ever the rustle of the advancing foam,
The surges' desolate thunder, and the cry
As of some lone babe in the whispering sky;
Ever I peer into the restless gloom
To where a ship clad dim and loftily
Looms steadfast in the wonder of her home.

THE MARKET-PLACE

MY mind is like a clamorous market-place.
All day in wind, rain, sun, its babel wells;
Voice answering to voice in tumult swells.
Chaffering and laughing, pushing for a place,
My thoughts haste on, gay, strange, poor, simple,
base;
This one buys dust, and that a bauble sells:
But none to any scrutiny hints or tells
The haunting secrets hidden in each sad face.

Dies down the clamour when the dark draws near;
Strange looms the earth in twilight of the West,
Lonely with one sweet star serene and clear,
Dwelling, when all this place is hushed to rest,
On vacant stall, gold, refuse, worst and best,
Abandoned utterly in haste and fear.

ANATOMY

BY chance my fingers, resting on my face,
Stayed suddenly where in its orbit shone
The lamp of all things beautiful; then on,
Following more heedfully, did softly trace
Each arch and prominence and hollow place
That shall revealed be when all else is gone —
Warmth, colour, roundness — to oblivion,
And nothing left but darkness and disgrace.

Life like a moment passed seemed then to be;
A transient dream this raiment that it wore;
While spelled my hand out its mortality
Made certain all that had seemed doubt before:
Proved — O how vaguely, yet how lucidly! —
How much death does; and yet can do no more.

EVEN IN THE GRAVE

I LAID my inventory at the hand
Of Death, who in his gloomy arbour sate;
And while he conned it, sweet and desolate
I heard Love singing in that quiet land.
He read the record even to the end —
The heedless, livelong injuries of Fate,
The burden of foe, the burden of love and hate;
The wounds of foe, the bitter wounds of friend:

All, all, he read, ay, even the indifference,
The vain talk, vainer silence, hope and dream.
He questioned me: "What seek'st thou then
instead?"

I bowed my face in the pale evening gleam.
Then gazed he on me with strange innocence:
"Even in the grave thou wilt have thyself," he said.

BRIGHT LIFE

“COME now,” I said, “put off these webs of death,

**Distract this leaden yearning of thine eyes
From lichened banks of peace, sad mysteries
Of dust fallen-in where passed the flitting breath:
Turn thy sick thoughts from him that slumbereth
In mouldered linen to the living skies,
The sun’s bright-clouded principalities,
The salt deliciousness the sea-breeze hath!**

**Lay thy warm hand on earth’s cold clods and think
What exquisite greenness sprouts from these to
grace**

**The moving fields of summer; on the brink
Of archèd waves the sea-horizon trace,
Whence wheels night’s galaxy; and in silence sink
The pride in rapture of life’s dwelling-place! ”**

HUMANITY

"EVER exulting in thyself, on fire
To flaunt the purple of the Universe,
To strut and strut, and thy great part rehearse;
Ever the slave of every proud desire;
Come now a little down where sports thy sire;
Choose thy small better from thy abounding
worse;
Prove thou thy lordship who hadst dust for nurse,
And for thy swaddling the primeval mire! "

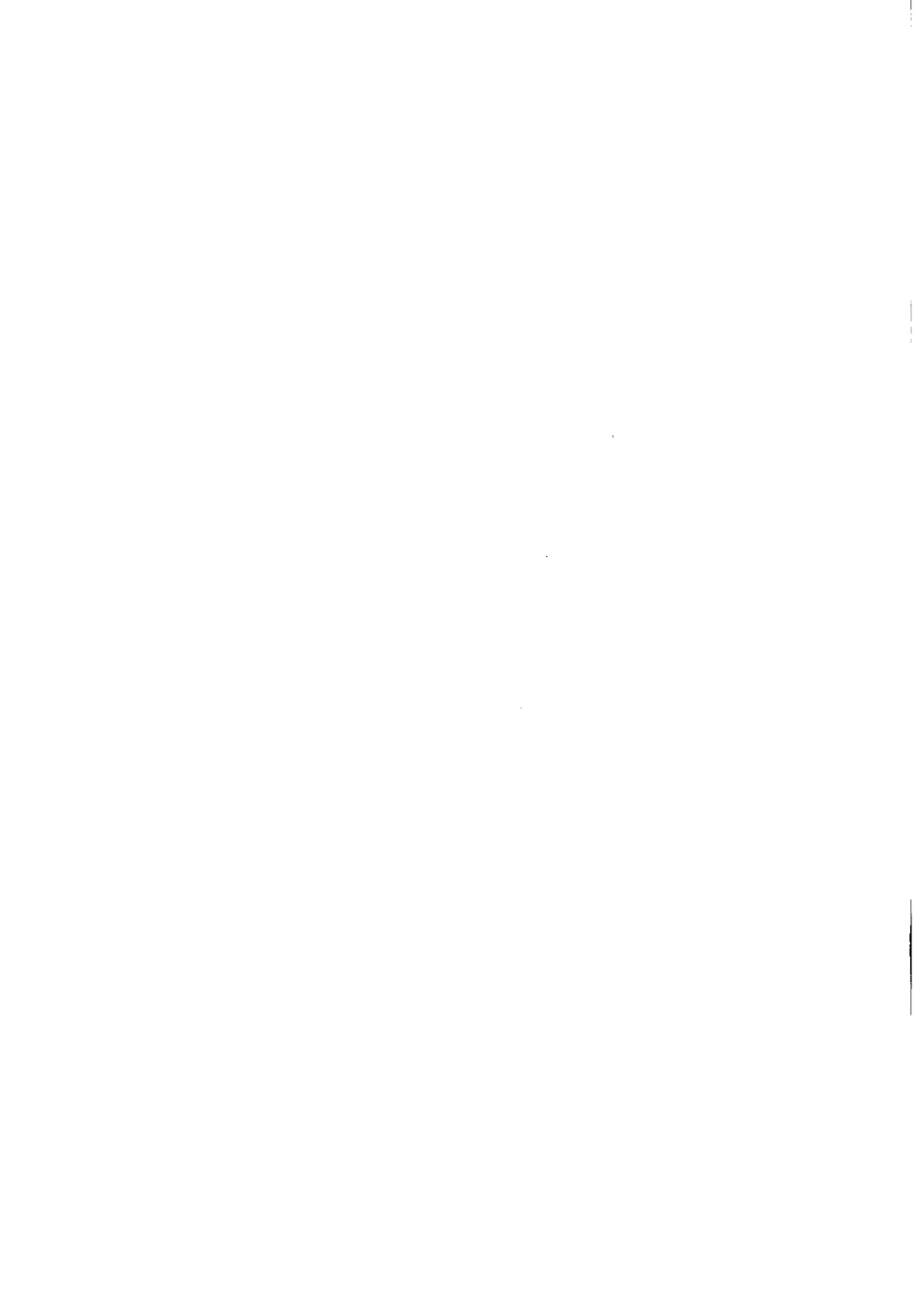
Then stooped our Manhood nearer, deep and still,
As from earth's mountains an unvoyaged sea,
Hushed my faint voice in its great peace until
It seemed but a bird's cry in eternity;
And in its future loomed the undreamable,
And in its past slept simple men like me.

VIRTUE

HER breast is cold; her hands how faint and
wan!

And the deep wonder of her starry eyes
Seemingly lost in cloudless Paradise,
And all earth's sorrow out of memory gone.
Yet sings her clear voice unrelenting on
Of loveliest impossibilities;
Though echo only answer her with sighs
Of effort wasted and delights foregone.

Spent, baffled, 'wildered, hated and despised,
Her stragglng warriors hasten to defeat;
By wounds distracted, and by night surprised,
Fall where death's darkness and oblivion meet:
Yet, yet: O breast how cold! O hope how far!
Grant my son's ashes lie where these men's are!



MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

REVERIE

BRING not bright candles, for his eyes
In twilight have sweet company;
Bring not bright candles, else they fly —
His phantoms fly —
Gazing aggrieved on thee!

Bring not bright candles, startle not
The phantoms of a vacant room,
Flocking above a child that dreams —
Deep, deep in dreams, —
Hid, in the gathering gloom!

Bring not bright candles to those eyes
That between earth and stars descry,
Lovelier for the shadows there,
Children of air,
Palaces in the sky!

THE MASSACRE

THE shadow of a poplar tree
Lay in that lake of sun,
As I with my little sword went in —
Against a thousand, one.

Haughty and infinitely armed,
Insolent in their wrath,
Plumed high with purple plumes they held
The narrow meadow path.

The air was sultry; all was still;
The sun like flashing glass;
And snip-snap my light-whispering steel
In arcs of light did pass.

Lightly and dull fell each proud head,
Spiked keen without avail,
Till swam my uncontented blade
With ichor green and pale.

THE MASSACRE

And silence fell: the rushing sun
 Stood still in paths of heat,
Gazing in waves of horror on
 The dead about my feet.

Never a whirl of wing, no bee
 Stirred o'er the shameful slain;
Nought but a thirsty wasp crept in,
 Stooped, and came out again.

The very air trembled in fear;
 Eclipsing shadow seemed
Rising in crimson waves of gloom —
 On one who dreamed.

ECHO

“WHO called? ” I said, and the words
Through the whispering glades,
Hither, thither, baffled the birds —
“ Who called? Who called? ”

The leafy boughs on high
Hissed in the sun;
The dark air carried my cry
Faintly on:

Eyes in the green, in the shade,
In the motionless brake,
Voices that said what I said,
For mockery's sake:

“ Who cares? ” I bawled through my tears;
The wind fell low:
In the silence, “ Who cares? who cares? ”
Wailed to and fro.

FEAR

I KNOW where lurk
The eyes of Fear;
I, I alone,
Where shadowy-clear,
Watching for me,
Lurks Fear.

'Tis ever still
And dark, despite
All singing and
All candlelight,
'Tis ever cold,
And night.

He touches me;
Says quietly,
"Stir not, nor whisper,
I am nigh;
Walk noiseless on,
I am by!"

He drives me
As a dog a sheep;
Like a cold stone

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

I cannot weep.
He lifts me
Hot from sleep

In marble hands
To where on high
The jewelled horror
Of his eye
Dares me to struggle
Or cry.

No breast wherein
To chase away
That watchful shape!
Vain, vain to say
"Haunt not with night
The Day!"

THE MERMAIDS

SAND, sand; hills of sand;
And the wind where nothing is
Green and sweet of the land;
No grass, no trees,
No bird, no butterfly,
But hills, hills of sand,
And a burning sky.

Sea, sea, mounds of the sea,
Hollow, and dark, and blue,
Flashing incessantly
The whole sea through;
No flower, no jutting root,
Only the floor of the sea,
With foam afloat.

Blow, blow, winding shells;
And the watery fish,
Deaf to the hidden bells,
In the water splash;
No streaming gold, no eyes,
Watching along the waves,
But far-blown shells, faint bells,
From the darkling caves.

MYSELF

THERE is a garden, grey
With mists of autumntide;
Under the giant boughs,
Stretched green on every side,

Along the lonely paths,
A little child like me,
With face, with hands, like mine,
Plays ever silently;

On, on, quite silently,
When I am there alone,
Turns not his head; lifts not his eyes;
Heeds not as he plays on.

After the birds are flown
From singing in the trees,
When all is grey, all silent,
Voices, and winds, and bees;

And I am there alone:
Forlornly, silently,
Plays in the evening garden
Myself with me.

AUTUMN

THERE is a wind where the rose was;
Cold rain where sweet grass was;
 And clouds like sheep
 Stream o'er the steep
Grey skies where the lark was.

Nought gold where your hair was;
Nought warm where your hand was;
 But phantom, forlorn,
 Beneath the thorn,
Your ghost where your face was.

Sad winds where your voice was;
Tears, tears where my heart was;
 And ever with me,
 Child, ever with me,
Silence where hope was.

WINTER

GREEN Mistletoe!

Oh, I remember now

A dell of snow,

Frost on the bough;

None there but I:

Snow, snow, and a wintry sky.

None there but I,

And footprints one by one,

Zigzaggedly,

Where I had run;

Where shrill and powdery

A robin sat in the tree.

And he whistled sweet;

And I in the crusted snow

With snow-clubbed feet

Jigged to and fro,

Till, from the day,

The rose-light ebbed away.

And the robin flew

Into the air, the air,

The white mist through;

And small and rare

WINTER

The night-frost fell
In the calm and misty dell.

And the dusk gathered low,
And the silver moon and stars
On the frozen snow
Drew taper bars,
Kindled winking fires
In the hooded briers.

And the sprawling Bear
Growled deep in the sky;
And Orion's hair
Streamed sparkling by:
But the North sighed low,
"Snow, snow, more snow!"



ENVOI

TO MY MOTHER

THINE is my all, how little when 'tis told
Beside thy gold!
Thine the first peace, and mine the livelong strife;
Thine the clear dawn, and mine the night of life;
Thine the unstained belief,
Darkened in grief.

Scarce even a flower but thine its beauty and name,
Dimmed, yet the same;
Never in twilight comes the moon to me,
Stealing thro' those far woods, but tells of thee,
Falls, dear, on my wild heart,
And takes thy part.

Thou art the child, and I — how steeped in age!
A blotted page
From that clear, little book life's taken away:
How could I read it, dear, so dark the day?
Be it all memory
'Twixt thee and me!

THE LISTENERS: 1914

THE THREE CHERRY TREES

THERE were three cherry trees once,
Grew in a garden all shady;
And there for delight of so gladsome a sight,
Walked a most beautiful lady,
Dreamed a most beautiful lady.

Birds in those branches did sing,
Blackbird and throstle and linnet,
But she walking there was by far the most fair —
Lovelier than all else within it,
Blackbird and throstle and linnet.

But blossoms to berries do come,
All hanging on stalks light and slender,
And one long summer's day charmed that lady
away,
With vows sweet and merry and tender;
A lover with voice low and tender.

Moss and lichen the green branches deck;
Weeds nod in its paths green and shady:
Yet a light footstep seems there to wander in
dreams,
The ghost of that beautiful lady,
That happy and beautiful lady.

OLD SUSAN

WHEN Susan's work was done, she would sit,
With one fat guttering candle lit,
And window opened wide to win
The sweet night air to enter in.
There, with a thumb to keep her place,
She would read, with stern and wrinkled face,
Her mild eyes gliding very slow
Across the letters to and fro,
While wagged the guttering candle flame
In the wind that through the window came.
And sometimes in the silence she
Would mumble a sentence audibly,
Or shake her head as if to say,
"You silly souls, to act this way!"
And never a sound from night I would hear,
Unless some far-off cock crowed clear;
Or her old shuffling thumb should turn
Another page; and rapt and stern,
Through her great glasses bent on me,
She would glance into reality;
And shake her round old silvery head,
With — "You! — I thought you was in bed!" —
Only to tilt her book again,
And rooted in Romance remain.

OLD BEN

SAD is old Ben Tristlewaite,
Now his day is done,
And all his children
Far away are gone.

He sits beneath his jasmined porch,
His stick between his knees,
His eyes fixed vacant
On his moss-grown trees.

Grass springs in the green path,
His flowers are lean and dry,
His thatch hangs in wisps against
The evening sky.

He has no heart to care now,
Though the winds will blow
Whistling in his casement,
And the rain drip through.

He thinks of his old Bettie,
How she'd shake her head and say,
"You'll live to wish my sharp old tongue
Could scold — some day."

THE LISTENERS, 1914

But as in pale high autumn skies
The swallows float and play,
His restless thoughts pass to and fro,
But nowhere stay.

Soft, on the morrow, they are gone;
His garden then will be
Denser and shadier and greener,
Greener the moss-grown tree.

MISS LOO

WHEN thin-strewn memory I look through,
I see most clearly poor Miss Loo,
Her tabby cat, her cage of birds,
Her nose, her hair, her muffled words,
And how she would open her green eyes,
As if in some immense surprise,
Whenever as we sat at tea
She made some small remark to me.

'Tis always drowsy summer when
From out the past she comes again;
The westering sunshine in a pool
Floats in her parlour still and cool;
While the slim bird its lean wires shakes,
As into piercing song it breaks;
Till Peter's pale-green eyes ajar
Dream, wake; wake, dream, in one brief bar.
And I am sitting, dull and shy,
And she with gaze of vacancy,

And large hands folded on the tray,
Musing the afternoon away;
Her satin bosom heaving slow
With sighs that softly ebb and flow.

THE LISTENERS: 1914

And her plain face in such dismay,
It seems unkind to look her way:
Until all cheerful back will come
Her gentle gleaming spirit home:
And one would think that poor Miss Loo
Asked nothing else, if she had you.

THE TAILOR

FEW footsteps stray when dusk droops o'er
The tailor's old stone-lintelled door.
There sits he stitching half asleep,
Beside his smoky tallow dip.
"Click, click," his needle hastes, and shrill
Cries back the cricket beneath the sill.
Sometimes he stays, and over his thread
Leans sidelong his old tousled head;
Or stoops to peer with half-shut eye
When some strange footfall echoes by;
Till clearer gleams his candle's spark
Into the dusty summer dark.
Then from his crosslegs he gets down,
To find how dark the evening is grown;
And hunched-up in his door he will hear
The cricket whistling crisp and clear;
And so beneath the starry grey
Will mutter half a seam away.

MARTHA

“ONCE . . . once upon a time . . .”

Over and over again,
Martha would tell us her stories,
In the hazel glen.

Hers were those clear grey eyes
You watch, and the story seems
Told by their beautifulness
Tranquil as dreams.

She would sit with her two slim hands
Clasped round her bended knees;
While we on our elbows lolled,
And stared at ease.

Her voice and her narrow chin,
Her grave small lovely head,
Seemed half the meaning
Of the words she said.

“Once . . . once upon a time . . .”
Like a dream you dream in the night,
Fairies and gnomes stole out
In the leaf-green light.

MARTHA

And her beauty far away
 Would fade, as her voice ran on,
Till hazel and summer sun
 And all were gone:

All fordone and forgot;
 And like clouds in the height of the sky,
Our hearts stood still in the hush
 Of an age gone by.

THE SLEEPER

AS Ann came in one summer's day,
She felt that she must creep,
So silent was the clear cool house,
It seemed a house of sleep.
And sure, when she pushed open the door,
Rapt in the stillness there,
Her mother sat, with stooping head,
Asleep upon a chair;
Fast — fast asleep; her two hands laid
Loose-folded on her knee,
So that her small unconscious face
Looked half unreal to be:
So calmly lit with sleep's pale light
Each feature was; so fair
Her forehead — every trouble was
Smoothed out beneath her hair.
But though her mind in dream now moved,
Still seemed her gaze to rest —
From out beneath her fast-sealed lids,
Above her moving breast —
On Ann; as quite, quite still she stood;
Yet slumber lay so deep
Even her hands upon her lap
Seemed saturate with sleep.

THE SLEEPER

And as Ann peeped, a cloudlike dread
 Stole over her, and then,
On stealthy, mouselike feet she trod,
 And tiptoed out again.

THE KEYS OF MORNING

WHILE at her bedroom window once,
Learning her task for school,
Little Louisa lonely sat
In the morning clear and cool,
She slanted her small bead-brown eyes
Across the empty street,
And saw Death softly watching her
In the sunshine pale and sweet.

His was a long lean fallow face;
He sat with half-shut eyes,
Like an old sailor in a ship
Becalmed 'neath tropic skies.
Beside him in the dust he had set
His staff and shady hat;
These, peeping small, Louisa saw
Quite clearly where she sat —

The thinness of his coal-black locks,
His hands so long and lean
They scarcely seemed to grasp at all
The keys that hung between:
Both were of gold, but one was small,
And with this last did he

THE KEYS OF MORNING

Wag in the air, as if to say,
"Come hither, child, to me!"

Louisa laid her lesson book
On the cold window-sill;
And in the sleepy sunshine house
Went softly down, until
She stood in the half-opened door,
And peeped. But strange to say,
Where Death just now had sunning sat
Only a shadow lay:
Just the tall chimney's round-topped cowl,
And the small sun behind,
Had with its shadow in the dust
Called sleepy Death to mind.
But most she thought how strange it was
Two keys that he should bear,
And that, when beckoning, he should wag
The littlest in the air.

RACHEL

RACHEL sings sweet —

Oh yes, at night,
Her pale face bent
In the candle-light,
Her slim hands touch
The answering keys,
And she sings of hope
And of memories:
Sings to the little
Boy that stands
Watching those slim,
Light, heedful hands.
He looks in her face;
Her dark eyes seem
Dark with a beautiful
Distant dream;
And still she plays,
Sings tenderly
To him of hope,
And of memory.

ALONE

A VERY old woman
Lives in yon house.
The squeak of the cricket,
The stir of the mouse,
Are all she knows
Of the earth and us.

Once she was young,
Would dance and play,
Like many another
Young popinjay;
And run to her mother
At dusk of day.

And colours bright
She delighted in;
The fiddle to hear,
And to lift her chin,
And sing as small
As a twittering wren.

But age apace
Comes at last to all;

THE LISTENERS: 1914

**And a lone house filled
With the cricket's call;
And the scampering mouse
In the hollow wall.**

THE BELLS

SHADOW and light both strove to be
The eight bell-ringers' company,
As with his gliding rope in hand,
Counting his changes, each did stand;
While rang and trembled every stone,
To music by the bell-mouths blown:
Till the bright clouds that towered on high
Seemed to re-echo cry with cry.
Still swang the clappers to and fro,
When, in the far-spread fields below,
I saw a ploughman with his team
Lift to the bells and fix on them
His distant eyes, as if he would
Drink in the utmost sound he could;
While near him sat his children three,
And in the green grass placidly
Played undistracted on, as if
What music earthly bells might give
Could only faintly stir their dream,
And stillness make more lovely seem.
Soon night hid horses, children, all
In sleep deep and ambrosial.
Yet, yet, it seemed, from star to star,
Welling now near, now faint and far,
Those echoing bells rang on in dream,
And stillness made even lovelier seem.

THE SCARECROW

ALL winter through I bow my head
Beneath the driving rain;
The North Wind powders me with snow
And blows me back again;
At midnight 'neath a maze of stars
I flame with glittering rime,
And stand, above the stubble, stiff
As mail at morning-prime.
But when that child, called Spring, and all
His host of children, come,
Scattering their buds and dew upon
These acres of my home,
Some rapture in my rags awakes;
I lift void eyes and scan
The skies for crows, those ravening foes,
Of my strange master, Man.
I watch him striding lank behind
His clashing team, and know
Soon will the wheat swish body high
Where once lay sterile snow;
Soon shall I gaze across a sea
Of sun-begotten grain,
Which my unflinching watch hath sealed
For harvest once again.

NOD

SOFTLY along the road of evening,
In a twilight dim with rose,
Wrinkled with age, and drenched with dew,
Old Nod, the shepherd, goes.

His drowsy flock streams on before him,
Their fleeces charged with gold,
To where the sun's last beam leans low
On Nod the shepherd's fold.

The hedge is quick and green with brier,
From their sand the conies creep;
And all the birds that fly in heaven
Flock singing home to sleep.

His lambs outnumber a noon's roses,
Yet, when night's shadows fall,
His blind old sheep-dog, Slumber-soon,
Misses not one of all.

His are the quiet steeps of dreamland,
The waters of no-more-pain,
His ram's bell rings 'neath an arch of stars,
"Rest, rest, and rest again."

THE BINDWEED

THE bindweed roots pierce down
Deeper than men do lie,
Laid in their dark-shut graves
Their slumbering kinsmen by.

Yet what frail thin-spun flowers
She casts into the air,
To breathe the sunshine, and
To leave her fragrance there.

But when the sweet moon comes,
Showering her silver down,
Half-wreathèd in faint sleep,
They droop where they have blown.

So all the grass is set,
Beneath her trembling ray,
With buds that have been flowers,
Brimmed with reflected day.

WINTER

CLOUDED with snow
The cold winds blow,
And shrill on leafless bough
The robin with its burning breast
Alone sings now.

The rayless sun,
Day's journey done,
Sheds its last ebbing light
On fields in leagues of beauty spread
Unearthly white.

Thick draws the dark,
And spark by spark,
The frost-fires kindle, and soon
Over that sea of frozen foam
Floats the white moon.

THERE BLOOMS NO BUD IN MAY

THERE blooms no bud in May
Can for its white compare
With snow at break of day,
On fields forlorn and bare.

For shadow it hath rose,
Azure, and amethyst;
And every air that blows
Dies out in beauteous mist.

It hangs the frozen bough
With flowers on which the night
Wheeling her darkness through
Scatters a starry light.

Fearful of its pale glare
In flocks the starlings rise;
Slide through the frosty air,
And perch with plaintive cries.

Only the inky rook,
Hunched cold in ruffled wings,
Its snowy nest forsook,
Caws of unnumbered Springs.

NOON AND NIGHT FLOWER

NOT any flower that blows
But shining watch doth keep;
Every swift changing chequered hour it knows
Now to break forth in beauty; now to sleep.

This for the roving bee
Keeps open house, and this
Stainless and clear is, that in darkness she
May lure the moth to where her nectar is.

Lovely beyond the rest
Are these of all delight: —
The tiny pimpernel that noon loves best,
The primrose palely burning through the night.

One 'neath day's burning sky
With ruby decks her place,
The other when Eve's chariot glideth by
Lifts her dim torch to light that dreaming face.

ESTRANGED

NO one was with me there —
Happy I was — alone;
Yet from the sunshine suddenly
A joy was gone.

A bird in an empty house
Sad echoes makes to ring,
Flitting from room to room
On restless wing:

Till from its shades he flies,
And leaves forlorn and dim
The narrow solitudes
So strange to him.

So, when with fickle heart
I joyed in the passing day,
A presence my mood estranged
Went grieved away.

THE TIRED CUPID

THE thin moonlight with trickling ray,
Thridding the boughs of silver may,
Trembles in beauty, pale and cool,
On folded flower, and mantled pool.
All in a haze the rushes lean —
And he — he sits, with chin between
His two cold hands; his bare feet set
Deep in the grasses, green and wet.
About his head a hundred rings
Of gold loop down to meet his wings,
Whose feathers, arched their stillness through,
Gleam with slow-gathering drops of dew.
The mouse-bat peers; the stealthy vole
Creeps from the covert of its hole;
A shimmering moth its pinions furls,
Grey in the moonshine of his curls;
'Neath the faint stars the night-airs stray,
Scattering the fragrance of the may;
And with each stirring of the bough
Shadow beclouds his childlike brow.

DREAMS

BE gentle, O hands of a child;
Be true: like a shadowy sea
In the starry darkness of night
Are your eyes to me.

But words are shallow, and soon
Dreams fade that the heart once knew;
And youth fades out in the mind,
In the dark eyes too.

What can a tired heart say,
Which the wise of the world have made dumb?
Save to the lonely dreams of a child,
“Return again, come!”

FAITHLESS

THE words you said grow faint;
The lamps you lit burn dim;
Yet, still be near your faithless friend
To urge and counsel him.

Still with returning feet
To where life's shadows brood,
With steadfast eyes made clear in death
Haunt his vague solitude.

So he, beguiled with earth,
Yet with its vain things vexed,
Keep even to his own heart unknown
Your memory unperplexed.

THE SHADE

DARKER than night; and oh, much darker she,
Whose eyes in deep night darkness gaze on me.
No stars surround her; yet the moon seems hid
Afar somewhere, beneath that narrow lid.
She darkens against the darkness; and her face
Only by adding thought to thought I trace,
Limned shadowily: O dream, return once more
To gloomy Hades and the whispering shore!

BE ANGRY NOW NO MORE

BE angry now no more!
If I have grieved thee — if
Thy kindness, mine before,
No hope may now restore:
Only forgive, forgive!

If still resentment burns
In thy cold breast, oh if
No more to pity turns,
No more, once tender, yearns
Thy love; oh yet forgive! . . .

Ask of the winter rain
June's withered rose again:
Ask grace of the salt sea:
She will not answer thee.
God would ten times have shriven
A heart so riven;
In her cold care thou would'st be
Still unforgiven.

EXILE

HAD the gods loved me I had lain
Where darnel is, and thorn,
And the wild night-bird's nightlong strain
Trembles in boughs forlorn.

Nay, but they loved me not; and I
Must needs a stranger be,
Whose every exiled day gone by
Aches with their memory.

WHERE?

WHERE is my love —
In silence and shadow she lies,
Under the April-grey, calm waste of the skies;
And a bird above,
In the darkness tender and clear,
Keeps saying over and over, Love lies here!

Not that she's dead;
Only her soul is flown
Out of its last pure earthly mansion;
And cries instead
In the darkness, tender and clear,
Like the voice of a bird in the leaves, Love —
Love lies here.

MUSIC UNHEARD

SWEET sounds, begone —
Whose music on my ear
Stirs foolish discontent
Or lingering here;
When, if I crossed
The crystal verge of death,
Him I should see.
Who these sounds murmureth.

Sweet sounds, begone —
Ask not my heart to break
Its bond of bravery for
Sweet quiet's sake;
Lure not my feet
To leave the path they must
Tread on, unfaltering,
Till I sleep in dust.

Sweet sounds, begone!
Though silence brings apace
Deadly disquiet
Of this homeless place;

MUSIC UNHEARD

And all I love
In beauty cries to me,
“We but vain shadows
And reflections be.”

ALL THAT'S PAST

VERY old are the woods;
And the buds that break
Out of the brier's boughs,
When March winds wake,
So old with their beauty are —
Oh, no man knows
Through what wild centuries
Roves back the rose.

Very old are the brooks;
And the rills that rise
Where snow sleeps cold beneath
The azure skies
Sing such a history
Of come and gone,
Their every drop is as wise
As Solomon.

Very old are we men;
Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
By Eve's nightingales;

ALL THAT'S PAST

**We wake and whisper awhile,
But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
Of amaranth lie.**

WHEN THE ROSE IS FADED

WHEN the rose is faded,
Memory may still dwell on
Her beauty shadowed,
And the sweet smell gone.

That vanishing loveliness,
That burdening breath
No bond of life hath then
Nor grief of death.

'Tis the immortal thought
Whose passion still
Makes of the changing
The unchangeable.

Oh, thus thy beauty,
Loveliest on earth to me,
Dark with no sorrow, shines
And burns, with Thee.

SLEEP

MEN all, and birds, and creeping beasts,
When the dark of night is deep,
From the moving wonder of their lives
Commit themselves to sleep.

Without a thought, or fear, they shut
The narrow gates of sense;
Heedless and quiet, in slumber turn
Their strength to impotence.

The transient strangeness of the earth
Their spirits no more see:
Within a silent gloom withdrawn,
They slumber in secrecy.

Two worlds they have — a globe forgot
Wheeling from dark to light;
And all the enchanted realm of dream
That burgeons out of night.

THE STRANGER

HALF-HIDDEN in a graveyard,
In the blackness of a yew,
Where never living creature stirs,
Nor sunbeam pierces through,

Is a tomb, green and crooked,—
Its faded legend gone,—
With but one rain-worn cherub's head
Of smouldering stone.

There, when the dusk is falling,
Silence broods so deep
It seems that every wind that breathes
Blows from the field of sleep.

Day breaks in heedless beauty,
Kindling each drop of dew,
But unforsaking shadow dwells
Beneath this lonely yew.

And, all else lost and faded,
Only this listening head
Keeps with a strange unanswering smile
Its secret with the dead.

NEVER MORE SAILOR

NEVER more, Sailor,
Shalt thou be
Tossed on the wind-ridden,
Restless sea.
Its tides may labour;
All the world
Shake 'neath that weight
Of waters hurled:
But its whole shock
Can only stir
Thy dust to a quiet
Even quieter.
Thou mock'st at land
Who now art come
To such a small
And shallow home;
Yet bore the sea
Full many a care
For bones that once
A sailor's were.
And though the grave's
Deep soundlessness
Thy once sea-deafened
Ear distress,

THE LISTENERS: 1914

**No robin ever
On the deep
Hopped with his song
To haunt thy sleep.**

ARABIA

FAR are the shades of Arabia,
Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
Under the ghost of the moon;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies.

Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked dark-haired Musicians
In the brooding silence of night.

They haunt me — her lutes and her forests;
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dreams recalls
Her loveliness to me:
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say —
“He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
They have stolen his wits away.”

THE MOUNTAINS

STILL, and blanched, and cold, and lone,
The icy hills far off from me
With frosty ulys overgrown
Stand in their sculptured secrecy.

No path of theirs the chamois fleet
Treads, with a nostril to the wind;
O'er their ice-marbled glaciers beat
No wings of eagles in my mind —

Yea, in my mind these mountains rise,
Their perils dyed with evening's rose;
And still my ghost sits at my eyes
And thirsts for their untroubled snows.

QUEEN DJENIRA

WHEN Queen Djenira slumbers through
The sultry noon's repose,
From out her dreams, as soft she lies,
A faint thin music flows.

Her lovely hands lie narrow and pale
With gilded nails, her head
Couched in its banded nets of gold
Lies pillowed on her bed.

The little Nubian boys who fan
Her cheeks and tresses clear,
Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful voices
Seem afar to hear.

They slide their eyes, and nodding, say,
"Queen Djenira walks to-day
The courts of the lord Pthamasar
Where the sweet birds of Psuthys are."

And those of earth about her porch
Of shadow cool and grey
Their sidelong beaks in silence lean,
And silent flit away.

NEVER-TO-BE

DOWN by the waters of the sea
Reigns the King of Never-to-be.
His palace walls are black with night;
His torches star and moon's light,
And for his timepiece deep and grave
Beats on the green unhastening wave.

Windswept are his high corridors;
His pleasance the sea-mantled shores;
For sentinel a shadow stands
With hair in heaven, and cloudy hands;
And round his bed, king's guards to be,
Watch pines in iron solemnity.

His hound is mute; his steed at will
Roams pastures deep with asphodel;
His queen is to her slumber gone;
His courtiers mute lie, hewn in stone;
He hath forgot where he did hide
His sceptre in the mountain-side.

Grey-capped and muttering, mad is he —
The childless King of Never-to-be;
For all his people in the deep

NEVER-TO-BE

**Keep, everlasting, fast asleep;
And all his realm is foam and rain,
Whispering of what comes not again.**

THE DARK CHÂTEAU

IN dreams a dark château
Stands ever open to me,
In far ravines dream-waters flow,
Descending soundlessly;
Above its peaks the eagle floats,
Lone in a sunless sky;
Mute are the golden woodland throats
Of the birds fitting by.

No voice is audible. The wind
Sleeps in its peace.
No flower of the light can find
Refuge beneath its trees;
Only the darkening ivy climbs
Mingled with wilding rose,
And cypress, morn and evening, time's
Black shadow throws.

All vacant, and unknown;
Only the dreamer steps
From stone to hollow stone,
Where the green moss sleeps,
Peers at the rivers in its deeps,
The eagle lone in the sky,

THE DARK CHÂTEAU

While the dew of evening drips,
Coldly and silently.

Would that I could steal in! —
Into each secret room;
Would that my sleep-bright eyes could win
To the inner gloom;
Gaze from its high windows,
Far down its mouldering walls,
Where amber-clear still Lethe flows,
And foaming falls.

But ever as I gaze,
From slumber soft doth come
Some touch my stagnant sense to raise
To its old earthly home;
Fades then that sky serene;
And peak of ageless snow;
Fades to a paling dawn-lit green,
My dark château.

THE DWELLING-PLACE

DEEP in a forest where the kestrel screamed,
Beside a lake of water, clear as glass,
The time-worn windows of a stone house gleamed
Named only "Alas."

Yet happy as the wild birds in the glades
Of that green forest, thridding the still air
With low continued heedless serenades,
Its heedless people were.

The throbbing chords of violin and lute,
The lustre of lean tapers in dark eyes,
Fair colours, beauteous flowers, faint-bloomed fruit
Made earth seem Paradise

To them that dwelt within this lonely house:
Like children of the gods in lasting peace,
They ate, sang, danced, as if each day's carouse
Need never pause, nor cease.

Some to the hunt would wend, with hound and horn,
And clash of silver, beauty, bravery, pride,
Heeding not one who on white horse upborne
With soundless hoofs did ride.

THE DWELLING-PLACE

Dreamers there were who watched the hours away
Beside a fountain's foam. And in the sweet
Of phantom evening, 'neath the night-bird's lay,
Did loved with loved-one meet.

All, all were children, for, the long day done,
They barred the heavy door against lightfoot
fear;
And few words spake though one known face was
gone,
Yet still seemed hovering near.

They heaped the bright fire higher; poured dark
wine;
And in long revelry dazed the questioning eye;
Curtained three-fold the heart-dismaying shine
Of midnight streaming by.

They shut the dark out from the painted wall,
With candles dared the shadow at the door,
Sang down the faint reiterated call
Of those who came no more.

Yet clear above that portal plain was writ,
Confronting each at length alone to pass
Out of its beauty into night star-lit,
That word "Alas!"

THE LISTENERS

"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
"Is there anybody there?" he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark
stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,

THE LISTENERS

While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
 'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
 Louder, and lifted his head: —
“Tell them I came, and no one answered,
 That I kept my word,” he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
 Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still
 house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
 And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
 When the plunging hoofs were gone.

TIME PASSES

THERE was nought in the Valley
But a Tower of Ivory,
Its base enwreathed with red
Flowers that at evening
Caught the sun's crimson
As to Ocean low he sped.

Lucent and lovely
It stood in the morning
Under a trackless hill;
With snows eternal
Muffling its summit,
And silence ineffable.

Sighing of solitude
Winds from the cold heights
Haunted its yellowing stone;
At noon its shadow
Stretched athwart cedars
Whence every bird was flown.

Its stair was broken,
Its starlit walls were
Fretted; its flowers shone

TIME PASSES

Wide at the portal,
Full-blown and fading,
Their last faint fragrance gone.

And on high in its lantern
A shape of the living
Watched o'er a shoreless sea,
From a Tower rotting
With age and weakness,
Once lovely as ivory.

BEWARE!

AN ominous bird sang from its branch,
 “Beware, O Wanderer!
Night 'mid her flowers of glamourie spilled
 Draws swiftly near:

“Night with her darkened caravans,
 Piled deep with silver and myrrh,
Draws from the portals of the East,
 O Wanderer near.”

“Night who walks plumèd through the fields
 Of stars that strangely stir —
Smitten to fire by the sandals of him
 Who walks with her.”

THE JOURNEY

HEART-SICK of his journey was the Wanderer;
Footsore and parched was he;
And a Witch who long had lurked by the wayside,
Looked out of sorcery.

“Lift up your eyes, you lonely Wanderer,”
She peeped from her casement small;
“Here’s shelter and quiet to give you rest, young
man,
And apples for thirst withal.”

And he looked up out of his sad reverie,
And saw all the woods in green,
With birds that flitted feathered in the dappling,
The jewel-bright leaves between.

And he lifted up his face towards her lattice,
And there, alluring-wise,
Slanting through the silence of the long past,
Dwelt the still green Witch’s eyes.

And vaguely from the hiding-place of memory
Voices seemed to cry;
“What is the darkness of one brief life-time
To the deaths thou hast made us die?

THE LISTENERS: 1914

“Heed not the words of the Enchantress
Who would us still betray!”
And sad with the echo of their reproaches,
Doubting, he turned away.

“I may not shelter beneath your roof, lady,
Nor in this wood’s green shadow seek repose,
Nor will your apples quench the thirst
A homesick wanderer knows.”

“‘Homesick’ forsooth!” she softly mocked him:
And the beauty in her face
Made in the sunshine pale and trembling
A stillness in that place.

And he sighed, as if in fear, that young Wanderer,
Looking to left and to right,
Where the endless narrow road swept onward,
Till in distance lost to sight.

And there fell upon his sense the brier,
Haunting the air with its breath,
And the faint shrill sweetness of the birds’ throats,
Their tent of leaves beneath.

And there was the Witch, in no wise heeding;
Her harbour, and fruit-filled dish,
Her pitcher of well-water, and clear damask —
All that the weary wish.

THE JOURNEY

And the last gold beam across the green world
Faltered and failed, as he
Remembered his solitude and the dark night's
Inhospitallity.

And he looked upon the Witch with eyes of sorrow
In the darkening of the day;
And turned him aside into oblivion;
And the voices died away. . . .

And the Witch stepped down from her casement:
In the hush of night he heard
The calling and wailing in dewy thicket
Of bird to hidden bird.

And gloom stole all her burning crimson,
Remote and faint in space
As stars in gathering shadow of the evening
Seemed now her phantom face.

And one night's rest shall be a myriad,
Midst dreams that come and go;
Till heedless fate, unmoved by weakness, bring him
This same strange by-way through:

To the beauty of earth that fades in ashes,
The lips of welcome, and the eyes
More beauteous than the feeble shine of Hesper
Lone in the lightening skies:

THE LISTENERS: 1914

**Till once again the Witch's guile entreat him;
But, worn with wisdom, he
Steadfast and cold shall choose the dark night's
Inhospitality.**

HAUNTED

THE rabbit in his burrow keeps
No guarded watch, in peace he sleeps;
The wolf that howls in challenging night
Cowers to her lair at morning light;
The simplest bird entwines a nest
Where she may lean her lovely breast,
Couched in the silence of the bough.
But thou, O man, what rest hast thou?

Thy emptiest solitude can bring
Only a subtler questioning
In thy divided heart. Thy bed
Recalls at dawn what midnight said.
Seek how thou wilt to feign content,
Thy flaming ardour's quickly spent;
Soon thy last company is gone,
And leaves thee — with thyself — alone.

Pomp and great friends may hem thee round,
A thousand busy tasks be found;
Earth's thronging beauties may beguile
Thy longing lovesick heart awhile;
And pride, like clouds of sunset, spread
A changing glory round thy head;

THE LISTENERS: 1914

But fade will all; and thou must come,
Hating thy journey, homeless, home.

Rave how thou wilt; unmoved, remote,
That inward presence slumbers not,
Frets out each secret from thy breast,
Gives thee no rally, pause, nor rest,
Scans close thy very thoughts, lest they
Should sap his patient power away,
Answers thy wrath with peace, thy cry
With tenderest taciturnity.

SILENCE

WITH changeful sound life beats upon the ear;
Yet, striving for release,
The most seductive string's
Sweet jargonings,
The happiest throat's
Most easeful, lovely notes
Fall back into a veiling silentness.

Even 'mid the rumour of a moving host,
Blackening the clear green earth,
Vainly 'gainst that thin wall
The trumpets call,
Or with loud hum
The smoke-bemuffled drum:
From that high quietness no reply comes forth.

When, all at peace, two friends at ease alone
Talk out their hearts,— yet still
Between the grace-notes of
The voice of love
From each to each
Trembles a rarer speech,
And with its presence every pause doth fill.

THE LISTENERS: 1914

Unmoved it broods, this all-encompassing hush
Of one who stooping near,
No smallest stir will make
Our fear to wake;
But yet intent
Upon some mystery bent
Harkens the lightest word we say, or hear.

WINTER DUSK

DARK frost was in the air without,
The dusk was still with cold and gloom,
When less than even a shadow came
And stood within the room.

But of the three around the fire,
None turned a questioning head to look,
Still read a clear voice, on and on,
Still stooped they o'er their book.

The children watched their mother's eyes
Moving on softly line to line;
It seemed to listen too — that shade,
Yet made no outward sign.

The fire-flames crooned a tiny song,
No cold wind moved the wintry tree;
The children both in Faërie dreamed
Beside their mother's knee.

And nearer yet that spirit drew
Above that heedless one, intent
Only on what the simple words
Of her small story meant.

THE LISTENERS: 1914

No voiceless sorrow grieved her mind,
No memory her bosom stirred,
Nor dreamed she, as she read to two,
 'Twas surely three who heard.

Yet when, the story done, she smiled
From face to face, serene and clear,
A love, half dread, sprang up, as she
 Leaned close and drew them near.

THE GHOST

PEACE in thy hands,
Peace in thine eyes,
Peace on thy brow;
Flower of a moment in the eternal hour,
Peace with me now.

Not a wave breaks,
Not a bird calls,
My heart, like a sea,
Silent after a storm that hath died,
Sleeps within me.

All the night's dews,
All the world's leaves,
All winter's snow
Seem with their quiet to have stilled in life's dream
All sorrowing now.

AN EPITAPH

HERE lies a most beautiful lady,
Light of step and heart was she;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Country.
But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
However rare — rare it be;
And when I crumble, who will remember
This lady of the West Country?

**“THE HAWTHORN HATH A DEATHLY
SMELL ”**

THE flowers of the field
Have a sweet smell;
Meadowsweet, tansy, thyme,
And faint-heart pimpernel;
But sweeter even than these,
The silver of the may
Wreathed is with incense for
The Judgment Day.

An apple, a child, dust,
When falls the evening rain,
Wild brier's spiced leaves,
Breathe memories again;
With further memory fraught,
The silver of the may
Wreathed is with incense for
The Judgment Day.

Eyes of all loveliness —
Shadow of strange delight,
Even as a flower fades
Must thou from sight;
But oh, o'er thy grave's mound,
Till come the Judgment Day,
Wreathed shall with incense be
Thy sharp-thorned may.

MOTLEY: 1918

THE LITTLE SALAMANDER

TO MARGOT

WHEN I go free,
I think 'twill be
A night of stars and snow,
And the wild fires of frost shall light
My footsteps as I go;
Nobody — nobody will be there
With groping touch, or sight,
To see me in my bush of hair
Dance burning through the night.

THE LINNET

UPON this leafy bush
With thorns and roses in it,
Flutters a thing of light,
A twittering linnnet.
And all the throbbing world
Of dew and sun and air
By this small parcel of life
Is made more fair;
As if each bramble-spray
And mounded gold-wreathed furze,
Harebell and little thyme,
Were only hers;
As if this beauty and grace
Did to one bird belong,
And, at a flutter of wing,
Might vanish in song.

THE SUNKEN GARDEN

SPEAK not — whisper not;
Here bloweth thyme and bergamot;
Softly on the evening hour,
Secret herbs their spices shower.
Dark-spiked rosemary and myrrh,
Lean-stalked, purple lavender;
Hides within her bosom, too,
All her sorrows, bitter rue.

Breathe not — trespass not;
Of this green and darkling spot,
Latticed from the moon's beams,
Perchance a distant dreamer dreams;
Perchance upon its darkening air,
The unseen ghosts of children fare,
Faintly swinging, sway and sweep,
Like lovely sea-flowers in its deep;
While, unmoved, to watch and ward,
Amid its gloomed and daisied sward,
Stands with bowed and dewy head
That one little leaden Lad.

THE RIDDLERS

"**T**HOU solitary!" the Blackbird cried,
"I, from the happy Wren,
Linnet and Blackcap, Woodlark, Thrush,
Perched all upon a sweetbrier bush,
Have come at cold of midnight-tide
To ask thee, Why and when
Grief smote thy heart so thou dost sing
In solemn hush of evening,
So sorrowfully, lovelorn Thing —
Nay, nay, not sing, but rave, but wail,
Most melancholic Nightingale?
Do not the dews of darkness steep
All pinings of the day in sleep?
Why, then, when rocked in starry nest
We mutely couch, secure, at rest,
Doth thy lone heart delight to make
Music for sorrow's sake?"
A Moon was there. So still her beam,
It seemed the whole world lay in dream,
Lulled by the watery sea.
And from her leafy night-hung nook
Upon this stranger soft did look
The Nightingale: sighed he: —

"'Tis strange, my friend; the Kingfisher
But yestermorn conjured me here

THE RIDDLERS

Out of his green and gold to say
Why thou, in splendour of the noon,
Wearest of colour but golden shoon,
And else dost thee array
In a most sombre suit of black?
'Surely,' he sighed, 'some load of grief,
Past all our thinking — and belief —
Must weigh upon his back!'
Do, then, in turn, tell me, If joy
Thy heart as well as voice employ
Why dost thou now most Sable, shine
In plumage woefuller far than mine?
Thy silence is a sadder thing
Than any dirge I sing! "

Thus, then, these two small birds, perched there,
Breathed a strange riddle both did share
Yet neither could expound.
And we — who sing but as we can,
In the small knowledge of a man —
Have we an answer found?
Nay, some are happy whose delight
Is hid even from themselves from sight;
And some win peace who spend
The skill of words to sweeten despair
Of finding consolation where
Life has but one dark end;
Who, in rapt solitude, tell o'er
A tale as lovely as forlore,
Into the midnight air.

MOONLIGHT

THE far moon maketh lovers wise
In her pale beauty trembling down,
Lending curved cheeks, dark lips, dark eyes,
A strangeness not her own.
And, though they shut their lids to kiss,
In starless darkness peace to win,
Even on that secret world from this
Her twilight enters in.

THE BLIND BOY

**"I HAVE no master," said the Blind Boy,
"My mother, 'Dame Venus' they do call;
Cowled in this hood she sent me begging
For whate'er in pity may befall.**

**"Hard was her visage, me adjuring,—
'Have no fond mercy on the kind!
Here be sharp arrows, bunched in quiver,
Draw close ere striking — thou art blind.'**

**"So stand I here, my woes entreating,
In this dark alley, lest the Moon
Point with her sparkling my barbed armoury
Shine on my silver-lacèd shoon.**

**"Oh, sir, unkind this Dame to me-ward;
Of the salt billow was her birth. . . .
In your sweet charity draw nearer
The saddest rogue on Earth!"**

THE QUARRY

YOU hunted me with all the pack,
Too blind, too blind, to see
By no wild hope of force or greed
Could you make sure of me.

And like a phantom through the glades,
With tender breast aglow,
The goddess in me laughed to hear
Your horns a-roving go.

She laughed to think no mortal ever
By dint of mortal flesh
The very Cause that was the Hunt
One moment could enmesh:

That though with captive limbs I lay,
Stilled breath and vanquished eyes,
He that hunts Love with horse and hound
Hunts out his heart and eyes.

MRS. GRUNDY

"STEP very softly, sweet Quiet-foot,
Stumble not, whisper not, smile not:
By this dark ivy stoop cheek and brow.
Still even thy heart! What seest thou? . . ."

"High-coifed, broad-browed, aged, suave yet grim,
A large flat face, eyes keenly dim,
Staring at nothing — that's me! — and yet,
With a hate one could never, no, never forget . . ."

"This is my world, my garden, my home,
Hither my father bade mother to come
And bear me out of the dark into light,
And happy I was in her tender sight.

"And then, thou frail flower, ~~she~~ died and went,
Forgetting my pitiless banishment,
And that Old Woman — an Aunt — she said,
Came hither, lodged, fattened, and made her bed.

"Oh yes, thou most blessed, from Monday to
Sunday,
Has lived on me, preyed on me, Mrs. Grundy:
Called me, 'dear Nephew'; on each of those chairs
Has gloated in righteousness, heard my prayers.

MOTLEY: 1918

" Why didst thou dare the thorns of the grove,
Timidest trespasser, huntress of love?
Now thou hast peeped, and now dost know
What kind of creature is thine for foe.

" Not that she'll tear out thy innocent eyes,
Poison thy mouth with deviltries.
Watch thou, wait thou: soon will begin
The guile of a voice: hark! . . ." " Come in, Come
in! "

THE TRYST

FLEE into some forgotten night and be
Of all dark long my moon-bright company:
Beyond the rumour even of Paradise come,
There, out of all remembrance, make our home:
Seek we some close hid shadow for our lair,
Hollowed by Noah's mouse beneath the chair
Wherein the Omnipotent, in slumber bound,
Nods till the piteous Trump of Judgment sound.
Perchance Leviathan of the deep sea
Would lease a lost mermaiden's grot to me,
There of your beauty we would joyance make —
A music wistful for the sea-nymph's sake:
Haply Elijah, o'er his spokes of fire,
Cresting steep Leo, or the heavenly Lyre,
Spied, tranced in azure of inanest space,
Some eyrie hostel, meet for human grace,
Where two might happy be — just you and I —
Lost in the uttermost of Eternity.
Think! In Time's smallest clock's minutest beat
Might there not rest be found for wandering feet?
Or, 'twixt the sleep and wake of Helen's dream,
Silence wherein to sing love's requiem?

MOTLEY: 1918

**No, no. Nor earth, nor air, nor fire, nor deep
Could lull poor mortal longingness asleep.
Somewhere there Nothing is; and there lost Man
Shall win what changeless vague of peace he can.**

ALONE

THE abode of the nightingale is bare,
Flowered frost congeals in the gelid air,
The fox howls from his frozen lair:

Alas, my loved one is gone,

I am alone:

It is winter.

Once the pink cast a winy smell,
The wild bee hung in the hyacinth bell,
Light in effulgence of beauty fell:

Alas, my loved one is gone,

I am alone:

It is winter.

My candle a silent fire doth shed,
Starry Orion hunts o'erhead;
Come moth, come shadow, the world is dead:

Alas, my loved one is gone,

I am alone:

It is winter.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

SEE this house, how dark it is
Beneath its vast-boughed trees!
Not one trembling leaflet cries
To that Watcher in the skies —
“Remove, remove thy searching gaze,
Innocent, of heaven’s ways,
Brood not, Moon, so wildly bright,
On secrets hidden from sight.”

“Secrets,” sighs the night-wind,
“Vacancy is all I find;
Every keyhole I have made
Wails a summons, faint and sad,
No voice ever answers me,

Only vacancy.”

“Once, once . . . ” the cricket shrills,
And far and near the quiet fills
With its tiny voice, and then
Hush falls again.

Mute shadows creeping slow
Mark how the hours go.
Every stone is mouldering slow.
And the least winds that blow

THE EMPTY HOUSE

Some minutest atom shake,
Some fretting ruin make
In roof and walls. How black it is
Beneath these thick-boughed trees!

MISTRESS FELL

“WHOM seek you here, sweet Mistress Fell? ”

“ One who loved me passing well.

Dark his eye, wild his face —

Stranger, if in this lonely place

Bide such an one, then, prythee, say

I am come here to-day.”

“ Many his like, Mistress Fell? ”

“ I did not look, so cannot tell.

Only this I surely know,

When his voice called me, I must go;

Touched me his fingers, and my heart

Leapt at the sweet pain’s smart.”

“ Why did he leave you, Mistress Fell? ”

“ Magic laid its dreary spell.—

Stranger, he was fast asleep;

Into his dream I tried to creep;

Called his name, soft was my cry;

He answered — not one sigh.

“ The flower and the thorn are here;

Falleth the night-dew, cold and clear;

MISTRESS FELL

Out of her bower the bird replies,
Mocking the dark with ecstasies,
See how the earth's green grass doth grow,
Praising what sleeps below!

"Thus have they told me. And I come,
As flies the wounded wild-bird home.
Not tears I give; but all that he
Clasped in his arms, sweet charity;
All that he loved — to him I bring
For a close whispering."

THE GHOST

**“WHO knocks? ” “I, who was beautiful,
Beyond all dreams to restore,
I, from the roots of the dark thorn am hither.
And knock on the door.”**

**“Who speaks? ” “I — once was my speech
Sweet as the bird’s on the air,
When echo lurks by the waters to heed;
’Tis I speak thee fair.”**

**“Dark is the hour! ” “Ay, and cold.”
“Lone is my house.” “Ah, but mine? ”
“Sight, touch, lips, eyes yearned in vain.”
“Long dead these to thine . . .”**

**Silence. Still faint on the porch
Brake the flames of the stars.
In gloom groped a hope-wearied hand
Over keys, bolts, and bars.**

**A face peered. All the grey night
In chaos of vacancy shone;
Nought but vast sorrow was there —
The sweet cheat gone.**

THE STRANGER

IN the woods as I did walk,
Dappled with the moon's beam,
I did with a Stranger talk,
And his name was Dream.

Spurred his heel, dark his cloak,
Shady-wide his bonnet's brim;
His horse beneath a silvery oak
Grazed as I talked with him.

Softly his breast-brooch burned and shone;
Hill and deep were in his eyes;
One of his hands held mine, and one
The fruit that makes men wise.

Wondrously strange was earth to see,
Flowers white as milk did gleam;
Spread to Heaven the Assyrian Tree,
Over my head with Dream.

Dews were still betwixt us twain;
Stars a trembling beauty shed;
Yet — not a whisper comes again
Of the words he said.

BETRAYAL

SHE will not die, they say,
She will but put her beauty by
And hie away.

Oh, but her beauty gone, how lonely
Then will seem all reverie,
How black to me!

All things will sad be made
And every hope a memory,
All gladness dead.

Ghosts of the past will know
My weakest hour, and whisper to me,
And coldly go.

And hers in deep of sleep,
Clothed in its mortal beauty I shall see,
And, waking, weep.

Naught will my mind then find
In man's false Heaven my peace to be:
All blind, and blind.

THE CAGE

WHY did you flutter in vain hope, poor bird,
Hard-pressed in your small cage of clay?
’Twas but a sweet, false echo that you heard,
Caught only a feint of day.

Still is the night all dark, a homeless dark.
Burn yet the unanswering stars. And silence
brings
The same sea’s desolate surge — sans bound or
mark —
Of all your wanderings.

Fret now no more; be still. Those steadfast eyes,
Those folded hands, they cannot set you free;
Only with beauty wake wild memories —
Sorrow for where you are, for where you would
be.

THE REVENANT

O ALL ye fair ladies with your colours and your
graces,
And your eyes clear in flame of candle and
hearth,
Toward the dark of this old window lift not up
your smiling faces,
Where a Shade stands forlorn from the cold of
the earth.

God knows I could not rest for one I still was
thinking of;
Like a rose sheathed in beauty her spirit was to
me;
Now out of unforgottenness a bitter draught I'm
drinking of,
'Tis sad of such beauty unremembered to be.

Men all all shades, O Woman.—Winds wist not
of the way they blow.
Apart from your kindness, life's at best but a
snare.
Though a tongue now past praise this bitter thing
doth say, I know
What solitude means, and how, homeless, I fare.

THE REVENANT

Strange, strange, are ye all — except in beauty
shared with her —

Since I seek one I loved, yet was faithless to in
death.

Not life enough I heaped, so thus my heart must
fare with her,

Now wrapt in the gross clay, bereft of life's
breath.

MUSIC

WHEN music sounds, gone is the earth I know,
And all her lovely things even lovelier grow;
Her flowers in vision flame, her forest trees,
Lift burdened branches, stilled with ecstasies.

When music sounds, out of the water rise
Naiads whose beauty dims my waking eyes,
Rapt in strange dreams burns each enchanted face,
With solemn echoing stirs their dwelling-place.

When music sounds, all that I was I am
Ere to this haunt of brooding dust I came;
While from Time's woods break into distant song
The swift-winged hours, as I hasten along.

THE REMONSTRANCE

I WAS at peace until you came
And set a careless mind aflame.
I lived in quiet; cold, content;
All longing in safe banishment,
Until your ghostly lips and eyes
 Made wisdom unwise.

Naught was in me to tempt your feet
To seek a lodging. Quite forgot
Lay the sweet solitude we two
In childhood used to wander through;
Time's cold had closed my heart about;
 And shut you out.

Well, and what then? . . . O vision grave,
Take all the little all I have!
Strip me of what in voiceless thought
Life's kept of life, un hoped, unsought! —
Reverie and dream that memory must
 Hide deep in dust!

This only I say: — Though cold and bare
The haunted house you have chosen to share,
Still 'neath its walls the moonbeam goes

MOTLEY: 1918

And trembles on the untended rose;
Still o'er its broken roof-tree rise
The starry arches of the skies;
And in your lightest word shall be
The thunder of an ebbing sea.

NOCTURNE

'TIS not my voice now speaks; but a bird
In darkling forest hollows a sweet throat —
Pleads on till distant echo too hath heard
And doubles every note:
So love that shrouded dwells in mystery
Would cry and waken thee.

Thou Solitary, stir in thy still sleep;
All the night waits thee, yet thou still dream'st on.
Furtive the shadows that about thee creep,
And cheat the shining footsteps of the moon:
Unseal thine eyes, it is my heart that sings,
And beats in vain its wings.

Lost in heaven's vague, the stars burn softly through
The world's dark latticings, we prisoned stray
Within its lovely labyrinth, and know
Mute seraphs guard the way
Even from silence unto speech, from love
To that self's self it still is dreaming of.

THE EXILE

I AM that Adam who, with Snake for guest,
Hid anguished eyes upon Eve's piteous breast.
I am that Adam who, with broken wings,
Fled from the Seraph's brazen trumpeting.
Betrayed and fugitive, I still must roam
A world where sin, and beauty, whisper of Home.

Oh, from wide circuit, shall at length I see
Pure daybreak lighten again on Eden's tree?
Loosed from remorse and hope and love's distress,
Enrobe me again in my lost nakedness?
No more with wordless grief a loved one grieve,
But to Heaven's nothingness re-welcome Eve?

THE UNCHANGING

AFTER the songless rose of evening,
Night quiet, dark, still,
In nodding cavalcade advancing
Starred the deep hill:
You, in the valley standing,
In your quiet wonder took
All that glamour, peace, and mystery
In one grave look.
Beauty hid your naked body,
Time dreamed in your bright hair,
In your eyes the constellations
Burned far and fair.

INVOCATION

THE burning fire shakes in the night,
On high her silver candles gleam,
With far-flung arms enflamed with light,
The trees are lost in dream.

Come in thy beauty! 'tis my love,
Lost in far-wandering desire,
Hath in the darkling deep above
Set stars and kindled fire.

EYES

O STRANGE devices that alone divide
The seër from the seen —
The very highway of earth's pomp and pride
That lies between
The traveller and the cheating, sweet delight
Of where he longs to be,
But which, bound hand and foot, he, close on night,
Can only see.

LIFE

HEARKEN, O dear, now strikes the hour we die;
We, who in our strange kiss
Have proved a dream the world's realities,
Turned each from other's darkness with a sigh,
Need heed no more of life, waste no more breath
On any other journey, but of death.

And yet: Oh, know we well
How each of us must prove Love's infidel;
Still out of ecstasy turn trembling back
To earth's same empty track
Of leaden day by day, and hour by hour, and be
Of all things lovely the cold mortuary.

THE DISGUISE

WHY in my heart, O Grief,
Dost thou in beauty hide?
Dead is my well-content,
And buried deep my pride.
Cold are their stones, beloved,
To hand and side.

The shadows of even are gone,
Shut are the day's clear flowers,
Now have her birds left mute
Their singing bowers,
Lone shall we be, we twain,
In the night hours.

Thou with thy cheek on mine,
And dark hair loosed, shalt see
Take the far stars for fruit
The cypress tree,
And in the yew's black
Shall the moon be.

We will tell no old tales,
Nor heed if in wandering air

MOTLEY: 1918

Die a lost song of love
Or the once fair;
Still as well-water be
The thoughts we share!

And, while the ghosts keep
Tryst from chill sepulchres,
Dreamless our gaze shall sleep,
And sealed our ears;
Heart unto heart will speak,
Without tears.

O, thy veiled, lovely face —
Joy's strange disguise —
Shall be the last to fade
From these rapt eyes,
Ere the first dart of daybreak
Pierce the skies.

VAIN QUESTIONING

WHAT needest thou? — a few brief hours of rest
Wherein to seek thyself in thine own breast;
A transient silence wherein truth could say
Such was thy constant hope, and this thy way? —
 O burden of life that is
 A livelong tangle of perplexities!

What seekest thou? — a truce from that thou art;
Some steadfast refuge from a fickle heart;
Still to be thou, and yet no thing of scorn,
To find no stay here, and yet not forlorn? —
 O riddle of life that is
 An endless war 'twixt contrarities.

Leave this vain questioning. Is not sweet the rose?
Sings not the wild bird ere to rest he goes?
Hath not in miracle brave June returned?
Burns not her beauty as of old it burned?
 O foolish one to roam
 So far in thine own mind away from home!

Where blooms the flower when her petals fade,
Where sleepeth echo by earth's music made,
Where all things transient to the changeless win,
There waits the peace thy spirit dwelleth in.

VIGIL

DARK is the night,
The fire burns faint and low,
Hours — days — years,
Into grey ashes go;
I strive to read,
But sombre is the glow.

Thumbed are the pages,
And the print is small;
Mocking the winds
That from the darkness call;
Feeble the fire that lends
Its light withal.

O ghost, draw nearer;
Let thy shadowy hair,
Blot out the pages
That we cannot share;
Be ours the one last leaf
By Fate left bare!

Let's *Finis* scrawl,
And then Life's book put by;
Turn each to each
In all simplicity:
Ere the last flame is gone
To warm us by.

THE OLD MEN

OLD and alone, sit we,
Caged, riddle-rid men;
Lost to Earth's "Listen!" and "See!"
Thought's "Wherefore?" and "When?"

Only far memories stray
Of a past once lovely, but now
Wasted and faded away,
Like green leaves from the bough.

Vast broods the silence of night,
The ruinous moon
Lifts on our faces her light,
Whence all dreaming is gone.

We speak not; trembles each head;
In their sockets our eyes are still;
Desire as cold as the dead;
Without wonder or will.
And One, with a lanthorn, draws near,
At clash with the moon in our eyes:
"Where art thou?" he asks: "I am here,"
One by one we arise.

And none lifts a hand to withhold
A friend from the touch of that foe:
Heart cries unto heart, "Thou art old!"
Yet, reluctant, we go.

THE DREAMER

O THOU who giving helm and sword,
Gav'st, too, the rusting rain,
And starry dark's all tender dews
To blunt and stain:

Out of the battle I am sped,
Unharm'd, yet stricken sore;
A living shape amid whispering shades
On Lethe's shore.

No trophy in my hands I bring,
To this sad, sighing stream,
The neighings and the trumps and cries
Were but a dream.

Traitor to life, of life betrayed:
O, of thy mercy deep,
A dream my all, the all I ask
Is sleep.

MOTLEY

COME, Death, I'd have a word with thee;
And thou, poor Innocency;
And love — a Lad with broken wing;
And Pity, too:
The Fool shall sing to you,
As Fools will sing.

Ay, music hath small sense,
And a tune's soon told,
And Earth is old,
And my poor wits are dense;
Yet have I secrets,— dark, my dear,
To breathe you all: Come near.
And lest some hideous listener tells,
I'll ring my bells.

They are all at war! —
Yes, yes, their bodies go
'Neath burning sun and icy star
To chaunted songs of woe,
Dragging cold cannon through a mire
Of rain and blood and spouting fire,
The new moon glinting hard on eyes
Wide with insanities!

Hush! . . . I use words
I hardly know the meaning of;
And the mute birds
Are glancing at Love
From out their shade of leaf and flower,
Trembling at treacheries
Which even in noonday cower.
Heed, heed not what I said
Of frenzied hosts of men,
More fools than I,
On envy, hatred fed,
Who kill, and die —
Spake I not plainly, then?
Yet Pity whispered, " Why? "

Thou silly thing, off to thy daisies go.
Mine was not news for child to know,
And Death — no ears hath. He hath supped where
creep
Eyeless worms in hush of sleep;
Yet, when he smiles, the hand he draws
Athwart his grinning jaws —
Faintly the thin bones rattle, and — There, there;
Hearken how my bells in the air
Drive away care! . . .

Nay, but a dream I had
Of a world all mad.
Not simply happy mad like me,
Who am mad like an empty scene

MOTLEY

Of water and willow tree,
Where the wind hath been;
But that foul Satan-mad,
Who rots in his own head,
And counts the dead,
Not honest one — and two —
But for the ghosts they were,
Brave, faithful, true,
When, head in air,
In Earth's clear green and blue
Heaven they did share
With beauty who bade them there. . .
There, now! Death goes —
Mayhap I've wearied him.
Ay, and the light doth dim,
And asleep's the rose,
And tired Innocence
In dreams is hence. . . .
Come, Love, my lad,
Nodding that drowsy head,
'Tis time thy prayers were said!

THE MARIONETTES

LET the foul Scene proceed:
There's laughter in the wings;
'Tis sawdust that they bleed,
But a box Death brings.

How rare a skill is theirs
These extreme pangs to show,
How real a frenzy wears
Each feigner of woe!

Gigantic dins uprise!
Even the gods must feel
A smarting of the eyes
As these fumes upswear.

Strange, such a Piece is free,
While we Spectators sit,
Aghast at its agony,
Yet absorbed in it!

Dark is the outer air,
Cold the night draughts blow
Mutely we stare, and stare
At the frenzied Show.

THE MARIONETTES

Yet heaven hath its quiet shroud
Of deep, immutable blue —
We cry "An end!" We are bowed
By the dread, " 'Tis true! "

While the Shape who hoofs applause
Behind our deafened ear,
Hoots — angel-wise — "the Cause! "
And affright even fear.

TO E. T. : 1917

YOU sleep too well — too far away,
For sorrowing word to soothe or wound;
Your very quiet seems to say
How longed-for a peace you have found.

Else, had not death so lured you on,
You would have grieved — 'twixt joy and fear —
To know how my small loving son
Had wept for you, my dear.

APRIL MOON

Roses are sweet to smell and see,
And lilies on the stem;
But rarer, stranger buds there be,
And she was like to them.

The little moon that April brings,
More lovely shade than light,
That, setting, silvers lonely hills
Upon the verge of night —

Close to the world of my poor heart
So stole she, still and clear;
Now that she's gone, O dark, and dark,
The solitude, the fear.

THE FOOL'S SONG

NEVER, no never, listen too long,
To the chattering wind in the willow, the night
bird's song.

'Tis sad in sooth to lie under the grass,
But none too gladsome to wake and grow cold
where life's shadows pass.

Dumb the old Toll-Woman squats,
And, for every green copper battered and worn,
doles out Nevers and Nots.

I know a Blind Man, too,
Who with a sharp ear listens and listens the whole
world through.

Oh, sit we snug to our feast,
With platter and finger and spoon — and good
victuals at ieast.

CLEAR EYES

CLEAR eyes do dim at last,
And cheeks outlive their rose.
Time, heedless of the past,
No loving-kindness knows;
Chill unto mortal lip
Still Lethe flows.

Griefs, too, but brief while stay,
And sorrow, being o'er,
Its salt tears shed away,
Woundeth the heart no more.
Stealthily lave those waters
That solemn shore.

Ah, then, sweet face burn on,
While yet quick memory lives!
And Sorrow, ere thou art gone,
Know that my heart forgives —
Ere yet, grown cold in peace,
It loves not, nor grieves.

DUST TO DUST

HEAVENLY Archer, bend thy bow;
Now the flame of life burns low,
Youth is gone; I, too, would go.

Even Fortune leads to this:
Harsh or kind, at last she is
Murderess of all ecstasies.

Yet the spirit, dark, alone,
Bound in sense, still hearkens on
For tidings of a bliss foregone.

Sleep is well for dreamless head,
At no breath astonished,
From the Gardens of the Dead.

I the immortal harps hear ring,
By Babylon's river languishing.
Heavenly Archer, loose thy string.

THE THREE STRANGERS

FAR are those tranquil hills,
Dyed with fair evening's rose;
On urgent, secret errand bent,
A traveller goes.

Approach him strangers three,
Barefooted, cowed; their eyes
Scan the lone, hastening solitary
With dumb surmise.

One instant in close speech
With them he doth confer:
God-spced, he hasteneth on,
That anxious traveller . . .

I was that man — in a dream:
And each world's night in vain
I patient wait on sleep to unveil
Those vivid hills again.

Would that they three could know
How yet burns on in me
Love — from one lost in Paradise —
For their grave courtesy.

ALEXANDER

IT was the Great Alexander,
Capped with a golden helm,
Sate in the ages, in his floating ship,
In a dead calm.

Voices of sea-maids singing
Wandered across the deep:
The sailors labouring on their oars
Rowed, as in sleep.

All the high pomp of Asia,
Charmed by that siren lay,
Out of their weary and dreaming minds,
Faded away.

Like a bold boy sate their Captain,
His glamour withered and gone,
In the souls of his brooding mariners,
While the song pined on.

Time, like a falling dew,
Life, like the scene of a dream,
Laid between slumber and slumber,
Only did seem. . . .

ALEXANDER

O Alexander, then,
In all us mortals too,
Wax thou not bold — too bold
On the wave dark-blue!

Come the calm, infinite night,
Who then will hear
Aught save the singing
Of the sea-maids clear?

THE REAWAKENING

GREEN in light are the hills, and a calm wind
 flowing
 Filleth the void with a flood of the fragrance of
 Spring;
Wings in this mansion of life are coming and going,
 Voices of unseen loveliness carol and sing.

Coloured with buds of delight the boughs are sway-
 ing,
 Beauty walks in the woods, and wherever she rove
Flowers from wintry sleep, her enchantment obey-
 ing,
 Stir in the deep of her dream, reawaken to love.

Oh, now begone sullen care — this light is my see-
 ing;
 I am the palace, and mine are its windows and
 walls;
Daybreak is come, and life from the darkness of
 being
 Springs, like a child from the womb, when the
 lonely one calls.

THE VACANT DAY

AS I did walk in meadows green
I heard the summer noon resound
With call of myriad things unseen
That leapt and crept upon the ground.

High overhead the windless air
Throbbled with the homesick coursing cry
Of swallows that did everywhere
Wake echo in the sky.

Beside me, too, clear waters coursed
Which willow branches, lapsing low,
Breaking their crystal gliding forced
To sing as they did flow.

I listened; and my heart was dumb
With praise no language could express;
Longing in vain for him to come
Who had breathed such blessedness

On this fair world, wherein we pass
So chequered and so brief a stay;
And yearned in spirit to learn, alas,
What kept him still away.

THE FLIGHT

How do the days press on, and lay
Their fallen locks at evening down,
Whileas the stars in darkness play
And moonbeams weave a crown —

A crown of flower-like light in heaven,
Where in the hollow arch of space
Morn's mistress dreams, and the Pleiads seven
Stand watch about her place.

Stand watch — O days no number keep
Of hours when this dark clay is blind.
When the world's clocks are dumb in sleep
Tis then I seek my kind.

FOR ALL THE GRIEF

FOR all the grief I have given with words
May now a few clear flowers blow,
In the dust, and the heat, and the silence of birds,
Where the lonely go.

For the thing unsaid that heart asked of me
Be a dark, cool water calling — calling
To the footsore, benighted, solitary,
When the shadows are falling.

O, be beauty for all my blindness,
A moon in the air where the weary wend,
And dews burdened with loving-kindness
In the dark of the end.

THE SCRIBE

WHAT lovely things
Thy hand hath made:
The smooth-plumed bird
In its emerald shade,
The seed of the grass,
The speck of stone
Which the wayfaring ant
Stirs — and hastes on!

Though I should sit
By some tarn in thy hills,
Using its ink
As the spirit wills
To write of Earth's wonders,
Its live, willed things,
Flit would the ages
On soundless wings.
Ere unto Z
My pen drew nigh;
Leviathan told,
And the honey-fly:
And still would remain
My wit to try —

THE SCRIBE

My worn reeds broken,
The dark tarn dry,
All words forgotten —
Thou, Lord, and I.

FARE WELL

WHEN I lie where shades of darkness
Shall no more assail mine eyes,
Nor the rain make lamentation
 When the wind sighs;
How will fare the world whose wonder
Was the very proof of me?
Memory fades, must the remembered
 Perishing be?

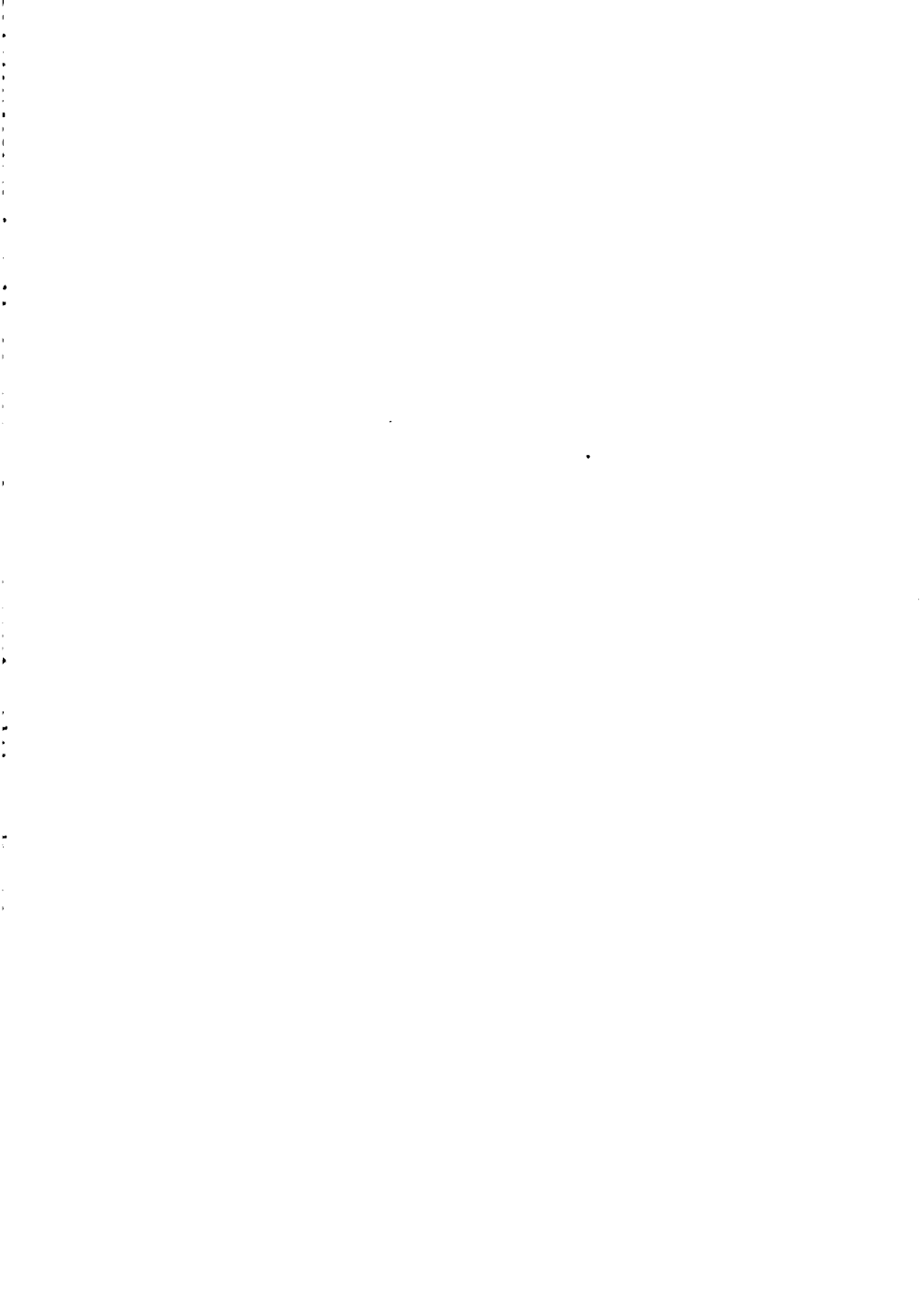
Oh, when this my dust surrenders
Hand, foot, lip, to dust again,
May these loved and loving faces
 Please other men!
May the rustling harvest hedgerow
Still the Traveller's Joy entwine,
And as happy children gather
 Posies once mine.

Look thy last on all things lovely,
Every hour. Let no night
Seal thy sense in deathly slumber
 Till to delight
Thou have paid thy utmost blessing;
Since that all things thou wouldst praise
Beauty took from those who loved them
 In other days.

BOOK TWO

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

TO JILL



SLEEPYHEAD

AS I lay awake in the white moonlight,
I heard a faint singing in the wood,

“ Out of bed,
Sleepyhead,
Put your white foot, now;
Here are we
Beneath the tree
Singing round the root now.”

I looked out of window, in the white moonlight,
The leaves were like snow in the wood —

“ Come away,
Child, and play
Light with the gnomies;
In a mound,
Green and round,
That’s where their home is.”

“ Honey sweet,
Curds to eat,
Cream and frumenty,
Shells and beads,
Poppy seeds,
You shall have plenty.”

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

But, as soon as I stooped in the dim moonlight
To put on my stocking and my shoe,
The sweet shrill singing echoed faintly away,
And the grey of the morning peeped through,
And instead of the gnomies there came a red robin
To sing of the buttercups and dew.

BLUEBELLS

WHERE the bluebells and the wind are,
Fairies in a ring I spied,
And I heard a little linnet
Singing near beside.

Where the primrose and the dew are —
Soon were sped the fairies all:
Only now the green turf freshens,
And the linnets call.

LOVELOCKS

I WATCHED the Lady Caroline
Bind up her dark and beauteous hair;
Her face was rosy in the glass,
And 'twixt the coils her hands would pass,
White in the candleshine.

Her bottles on the table lay,
Stoppered, yet sweet of violet;
Her image in the mirror stooped
To view those locks as lightly looped
As cherry boughs in May.

The snowy night lay dim without,
I heard the Waits their sweet song sing;
The window smouldered keen with frost;
Yet still she twisted, sleeked and tossed
Her beauteous hair about.

TARTARY

IF I were Lord of Tartary,
Myself and me alone,
My bed should be of ivory,
Of beaten gold my throne;
And in my court would peacocks flaunt,
And in my forests tigers haunt,
And in my pools great fishes slant
Their fins athwart the sun.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
Trumpeters every day
To every meal should summon me,
And in my courtyard bray;
And in the evening lamps would shine,
Yellow as honey, red as wine,
While harp, and flute, and mandoline,
Made music sweet and gay.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
I'd wear a robe of beads,
White, and gold, and green they'd be —
And clustered thick as seeds;
And ere should wane the morning-star,
I'd don my robe and scimitar,

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

And zebras seven should draw my car
Through Tartary's dark glades.

Lord of the fruits of Tartary,
Her rivers silver-pale!
Lord of the hills of Tartary,
Glen, thicket, wood, and dale!
Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,
Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas,
Her bird-delighting citron-trees
In every purple vale!

THE BUCKLE

I HAD a silver buckle,
I sewed it on my shoe,
And 'neath a sprig of mistletoe
I danced the evening through.

I had a bunch of cowslips,
I hid them in a grot,
In case the elves should come by night
And me remember not.

I had a yellow riband,
I tied it in my hair,
That, walking in the garden,
The birds might see it there.

I had a secret laughter,
I laughed it near the wall:
Only the ivy and the wind
May tell of it at all.

THE HARE

IN the black furrow of a field
I saw an old witch-hare this night;
And she cocked a lissome ear,
And she eyed the moon so bright,
And she nibbled of the green;
And I whispered "Wh-s-st! witch-hare,"
Away like a ghostie o'er the field
She fled, and left the moonlight there.

BUNCHES OF GRAPES

"BUNCHES of grapes," says Timothy;

"Pomegranates pink," says Elaine;

**"A junket of cream and a cranberry tart
For me,"** says Jane.

"Love-in-a-mist," says Timothy;

"Primroses pale," says Elaine;

**"A nosegay of pinks and mignonette
For me,"** says Jane.

"Chariots of gold," says Timothy;

"Silvery wings," says Elaine;

**"A bumpity ride in a waggon of hay
For me,"** says Jane.

JOHN MOULDY

I SPIED John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone;
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.

He read no book, he snuffed no candle;
The rats ran in, the rats ran out;
And far and near, the drip of water
Went whispering about.

The dusk was still, with dew a-falling,
I saw the Dog Star bleak and grim,
I saw a slim brown rat of Norway
Creep over him.

I spied John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone;
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.

THE FLY

HOW large unto the tiny fly
Must little things appear! —
A rosebud like a feather bed,
Its prickle like a spear;

A dewdrop like a looking-glass,
A hair like golden wire;
The smallest grain of mustard-seed
As fierce as coals of fire;

A loaf of bread, a lofty hill;
A wasp, a cruel leopard;
And specks of salt as bright to see
As lambkins to a shepherd.

SONG

O FOR a moon to light me home!
O for a lanthorn green!
For those sweet stars the Pleiades,
That glitter in the darkling trees;
O for a lovelorn taper! O
For a lanthorn green!

O for a frock of tartan!
O for clear, wild grey eyes!
For fingers light as violets,
'Neath branches that the blackbird frets;
O for a thistly meadow! O
For clear, wild grey eyes!

O for a heart like almond boughs!
O for sweet thoughts like rain!
O for first-love like fields of grey
Shut April-buds at break of day!
O for a sleep like music!
Dreams still as rain!

I SAW THREE WITCHES

I SAW three witches
That bowed down like barley,
And straddled their brooms 'neath a louring sky,
And, mounting a storm-cloud,
Aloft on its margin,
Stood black in the silver as up they did fly.

I saw three witches
That mocked the poor sparrows
They carried in cages of wicker along,
Till a hawk from his eyrie
Swooped down like an arrow,
Smote on the cages, and ended their song.

I saw three witches
That sailed in a shallop,
All turning their heads with a snickering smile,
Till a bank of green osiers
Concealed their grim faces,
Though I heard them lamenting for many a mile.

I saw three witches
Asleep in a valley,

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

**Their heads in a row, like stones in a flood,
Till the moon, creeping upward,
Looked white through the valley,
And turned them to bushes in bright scarlet bud.**

THE SILVER PENNY

“SAILORMAN, I'll give to you
My bright silver penny,
If out to sea you'll sail me
And my dear sister Jenny.”

“Get in, young sir, I'll sail ye
And your dear sister Jenny,
But pay she shall her golden locks
Instead of your penny.”

They sail away, they sail away,
O fierce the winds blew!
The foam flew in clouds,
And dark the night grew!

And all the wild sea-water
Climbed steep into the boat;
Back to the shore again
Sail they will not.

Drowned is the sailorman,
Drowned is sweet Jenny,
And drowned in the deep sea
A bright silver penny.

THE RAINBOW

I SAW the lovely arch
Of Rainbow span the sky,
The gold sun burning
As the rain swept by.

In bright-ringed solitude
The showery foliage shone
One lovely moment,
And the Bow was gone.

THE FAIRIES DANCING

I HEARD along the early hills,
Ere yet the lark was risen up,
Ere yet the dawn with firelight fills
The night-dew of the bramble-cup,—
I heard the fairies in a ring
Sing as they tripped a lilting round
Soft as the moon on wavering wing.
The starlight shook as if with sound,
As if with echoing, and the stars
Prankt their bright eyes with trembling gleams;
While red with war the gusty Mars
Rained upon earth his ruddy beams.
He shone alone, low down the West,
While I, behind a hawthorn-bush,
Watched on the fairies flaxen-tressed
The fires of the morning flush.
Till, as a mist, their beauty died,
Their singing shrill and fainter grew;
And daylight tremulous and wide
Flooded the moorland through and through;
Till Urdon's copper weathercock
Was reared in golden flame afar,
And dim from moonlit dreams awoke
The towers and groves of Arroar.

REVERIE

WHEN slim Sophia mounts her horse
And paces down the avenue,
It seems an inward melody
She paces to.

Each narrow hoof is lifted high
Beneath the dark enclustering pines,
A silver ray within his bit
And bridle shines.

His eye burns deep, his tail is arched,
And streams upon the shadowy air,
The daylight sleeks his jetty flanks,
His mistress' hair.

Her habit flows in darkness down,
Upon the stirrup rests her foot,
Her brow is lifted, as if earth
She heeded not.

'Tis silent in the avenue,
The sombre pines are mute of song,
The blue is dark, there moves no breeze
The boughs among.

REVERIE

When slim Sophia mounts her horse
And paces down the avenue,
It seems an inward melody
She paces to.

THE THREE BEGGARS

TWAS autumn daybreak gold and wild,
While past St. Ann's grey tower they shuffled,
Three beggars spied a fairy-child
In crimson mantle muffled.

The daybreak lighted up her face
All pink, and sharp, and emerald-eyed;
She looked on them a little space,
And shrill as hautboy cried: —

“O three tall footsore men of rags
Which walking this gold morn I see,
What will ye give me from your bags
For fairy kisses three?”

The first, that was a reddish man,
Out of his bundle takes a crust:
“La, by the tombstones of St. Ann,
There's fee, if fee ye must!”

The second, that was a chestnut man,
Out of his bundle draws a bone:
“Lo, by the belfry of St. Ann,
And all my breakfast gone!”

THE THREE BEGGARS

The third, that was a yellow man,
Out of his bundle picks a groat,
"La, by the Angel of St. Ann,
And I must go without."

That changeling, lean and icy-lipped,
Touched crust, and bone, and groat, and lo!
Beneath her finger taper-tipped
The magic all ran through.

Iastead of crust a peacock pie,
Instead of bone sweet venison,
Instead of groat a white lily
With seven blooms thereon.

And each fair cup was deep with wine:
Such was the changeling's charity,
The sweet feast was enough for nine,
But not too much for three.

O toothsome meat in jelly froze!
O tender haunch of elfin stag!
O rich the odour that arose!
O plump with scraps each bag!

There, in the daybreak gold and wild,
Each merry-hearted beggar man
Drank deep unto the fairy child,
And blessed the good St. Ann.

THE DWARF

“NOW, Jinnie, my dear, to the dwarf be off,
That lives in Barberry Wood,
And fetch me some honey, but be sure you don't
laugh,—
He hates little girls that are rude, are rude,
He hates little girls that are rude.”

Jane tapped at the door of the house in the wood,
And the dwarf looked over the wall,
He eyed her so queer, 'twas as much as she could
To keep from laughing at all, at all,
To keep from laughing at all.

His shoes down the passage came clod, clod, clod,
And when he opened the door,
He croaked so harsh, 'twas as much as she could
To keep from laughing the more, the more,
To keep from laughing the more.

As there, with his bushy red beard, he stood,
Pricked out to double its size,
He squinted so cross, 'twas as much as she could
To keep the tears out of her eyes, her eyes,
To keep the tears out of her eyes.

THE DWARF

He slammed the door, and went clod, clod, clod,
But while in the porch she bides,
He squealed so fierce, 'twas as much as she could
To keep from cracking her sides, her sides,
To keep from cracking her sides.

He threw a pumpkin over the wall,
And melons and apples beside,
So thick in the air that to see them all fall,
She laughed, and laughed, till she cried, cried,
cried;
Jane laughed and laughed till she cried.

Down fell her teardrops a pit-apat-pat,
And red as a rose she grew; —
“Kah! kah,” said the dwarf, “is it crying you’re
at?
It’s the very worst thing you could do, do, do,
It’s the very worst thing you could do.”

He slipped like a monkey up into a tree,
He shook her down cherries like rain;
“See now,” says he, cheeping, “a blackbird I be,
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again — gain — gain,
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again.”

Ah me! what a strange, what a gladsome duet
From a house in the deeps of a wood!
Such shrill and such harsh voices never met yet

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

A-laughing as loud as they could, could, could,
A-laughing as loud as they could.

Come Jinnie, come dwarf, cocksparrow, and bee,
There's a ring gaudy-green in the dell,
Sing, sing, ye sweet cherubs, that flit in the tree;
La! who can draw tears from a well, well, well,
Who ever drew tears from a well!

ALULVAN

THE sun is clear of bird and cloud,
The grass shines windless, grey and still,
In dusky ruin the owl dreams on,
The cuckoo echoes on the hill;
Yet soft along Alulvan's walks
The ghost at noonday stalks.

His eyes in shadow of his hat
Stare on the ruins of his house;
His cloak, up-fastened with a brooch,
Of faded velvet grey as mouse,
Brushes the roses as he goes:
Yet wavers not one rose.

The wild birds in a cloud fly up
From their sweet feeding in the fruit;
The droning of the bees and flies
Rises gradual as a lute;
Is it for fear the birds are flown,
And shrills the insect-drone?

Thick is the ivy over Alulvan,
And crisp with summer-heat its turf;

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Far, far across its empty pastures
Alulvan's sands are white with surf:
And he himself is grey as the sea,
Watching beneath an elder-tree.

All night the fretful, shrill Banshee
Lurks in the ivy's dark festoons,
Calling for ever, o'er garden and river,
Through magpie changing of the moons:
"Alulvan, O, alas! Alulvan,
The doom of lone Alulvan! "

THE PEDLAR

THERE came a pedlar to an evening house;
Sweet Lettice, from her lattice looking down,
Wondered what man he was, so curious
His black hair dangled on his tattered gown:
Then lifts he up his face, with glittering eyes,—
“What will you buy, sweetheart? — Here’s honey-
comb,
And mottled pippins, and sweet mulberry pies,
Comfits and peaches, snowy cherry bloom,
To keep in water for to make night sweet:
All that you want, sweetheart,— come, taste and
eat! ”

Even with his sugared words, returned to her
The clear remembrance of a gentle voice:
“And O! my child, should ever a flatterer
Tap with his wares, and promise of all joys,
And vain sweet pleasures that on earth may be,
Seal up your ears, sing some old happy song,
Confuse his magic who is all mockery:
His sweets are death.” Yet, still how she doth
long
But just to taste, then shut the lattice tight,
And hide her eyes from the delicious sight!

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"What must I pay?" she whispered. "Pay!"
says he,

"Pedlar I am who through this wood to roam,
One lock of her hair is gold enough for me,
For apple, peach, comfit, or honeycomb!"
But from her bough a drowsy squirrel cried,
"Trust him not, Lettice, trust, oh trust him not!"
And many another woodland tongue beside
Rose softly in the silence — "Trust him not!"
Then cried the Pedlar in a bitter voice,
"What, in the thicket, is this idle noise?"

A late, harsh blackbird smote him with her wings,
As through the glade, dark in the dim, she flew;
Yet still the Pedlar his old burden sings, —
"What, pretty sweetheart, shall I show to you?
Here's orange ribands, here's a string of pearls,
Here's silk of buttercup and pansy glove,
A pin of tortoiseshell for windy curls,
A box of silver, scented sweet with clove:
Come now," he says, with dim and lifted face,
"I pass not often such a lonely place."

"Pluck not a hair!" a hidden rabbit cried,
"With but one hair he'll steal thy heart away,
Then only sorrow shall thy lattice hide:
Go in! all honest pedlars come by day."
There was dead silence in the drowsy wood;
"Here's syrup for to lull sweet maids to sleep;

THE PEDLAR

And bells for dreams, and fairy wine and food
All day thy heart in happiness to keep"; —
And now she takes the scissors on her thumb,—
"O, then, no more unto my lattice come!"

Sad is the sound of weeping in the wood!
Now only night is where the Pedlar was;
And bleak as frost upon a quickling bud
His magic steals in darkness, O alas!
Why all the summer doth sweet Lettice pine?
And, ere the wheat is ripe, why lies her gold
Hid 'neath fresh new-plucked sprigs of eglantine?
Why all the morning hath the cuckoo tolled,
Sad, to and fro, in green and secret ways,
With solemn bells the burden of his days?

And, in the market-place, what man is this
Who wears a loop of gold upon his breast,
Stuck heartwise; and whose glassy flatteries
Take all the townsfolk ere they go to rest
Who come to buy and gossip? Doth his eye
Remember a face lovely in a wood?
O people! hasten, hasten, do not buy
His woeful wares; the bird of grief doth brood
There where his heart should be; and far away
There mourns long sorrowfulness this happy day.

THE OGRE

'TIS moonlight on Trebarwith Vale,
And moonlight on an Ogre keen,
Who, prowling hungry through the dale,
A lone cottage hath seen.

Small, with thin smoke ascending up,
Three casements and a door —
The Ogre eager is to tap,
And here seems dainty store.

Sweet as a larder to a mouse,
So to him staring down,
Seemed the small-windowed moonlit house,
With jasmine overgrown.

He snorted, as the billows snort
In darkness of the night;
Betwixt his lean locks tawny-swart,
He glowered on the sight.

THE OGRE

Into the garden sweet with peas
He put his wooden shoe,
And bending back the apple trees
Crept covetously through;

Then, stooping, with a gloating eye
Stared through the lattice small,
And spied two children which did lie
Asleep, against the wall.

Into their dreams no shadow fell
Of his disastrous thumb
Groping discreet, and gradual,
Across the quiet room.

But scarce his nail had scraped the cot
Wherein these children lay,
As if his malice were forgot,
It suddenly did stay.

For faintly in the ingle-nook
He heard a cradle-song,
That rose into his thoughts and woke
Terror them among.

For she who in the kitchen sat
Darning by the fire,
Guileless of what he would be at,
Sang sweet as wind or wire: —

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"Lullay, thou little tiny child,
By-by, lullay, lullie;
Jesu in glory, meek and mild,
This night remember thee!

"Fiend, witch, and goblin, foul and wild,
He deems them smoke to be;
Lullay, thou little tiny child,
By-by, lullay, lullie!"

The Ogre lifted up his eyes
Into the moon's pale ray,
And gazed upon her leopard-wise,
Cruel and clear as day;

He snarled in gluttony and fear —
"The wind blows dismally —
Jesu in storm my lambs be near,
By-by, lullay, lullie!"

And like a ravenous beast which sees
The hunter's icy eye,
So did this wretch in wrath confess
Sweet Jesu's mastery.

Lightly he drew his greedy thumb
From out that casement pale,
And strode, enormous, swiftly home,
Whinnying down the dale.

DAME HICKORY

"DAME HICKORY, Dame Hickory,
Here's sticks for your fire,
Furze-twigs, and oak-twigs,
And beech-twigs, and briar! "
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found 'twas the voice of the False Faerie.

" Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here's meat for your broth,
Goose-flesh, and hare's flesh,
And pig's trotters both! "
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found 'twas the voice of the False Faerie.

" Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here's a wolf at your door,
His teeth grinning white,
And his tongue wagging sore! "
"Nay!" said Dame Hickory, "ye False Faerie!
But a wolf 'twas indeed, and famished was he.

" Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here's buds for your tomb,

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Bramble, and lavender,
And rosemary bloom! ”
“ Wh-s-st! ” said Dame Hickory, “ ye False Faerie,
Ye cry like a wolf, ye do, and trouble poor me.”

THE PILGRIM

“SHALL we carry now your bundle,
You old grey man?
Over hill and dale and meadow
Lighter than an owlet's shadow
We will whirl it through the air,
Through blue regions shrill and bare,
So you may in comfort fare —
Shall we carry now your bundle,
You old grey man? ”

The Pilgrim lifted up his eyes
And saw three fiends, in the skies,
Stooping o'er that lonely place
Evil in form and face.

“Nay,” he answered, “leave me, leave me,
Ye three wild fiends!
Far it is my feet must wander,
And my city lieth yonder
I must bear my bundle alone,
Till the day be done.”
The fiends stared down with leaden eye,
Fanning the chill air duskily,
’Twixt their hoods they stoop and cry: —

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"Shall we smooth the path before you,
You old grey man?
Sprinkle it green with gilded showers,
Strew it o'er with painted flowers,
Lure bright birds to sing and flit
In the honeyed airs of it?
Shall we smooth the path before you,
Grey old man?"

"O, 'tis better silence, silence,
Ye three wild fiends!
Footsore am I, faint and weary,
Dark the way, forlorn and dreary,
Beaten of wind, torn of briar,
Smitten of rain, parched with fire:
O, silence, silence, silence,
Ye three wild fiends!"

It seemed a smoke obscured the air,
Bright lightning quivered in the gloom,
And a faint voice of thunder spake
Far in the lone hill-hollows — "Come!"
Then, half in fury, half in dread,
The fiends drew closer down, and said:

"Nay, thou stubborn fond old man,
Hearken awhile!
Thorn, and dust, and ice and heat,
Tarry now, sit down and eat:
Heat, and ice, and dust and thorn;

THE PILGRIM

Stricken, footsore, parched, forlorn —
Juice of purple grape shall be
Youth and solace unto thee.
Music of tambour, wire and wind,
Ease shall bring to heart and mind;
Wonderful sweet mouths shall sigh
Languishing and lullaby;
Turn then! Curse the dream that lures thee;
Turn thee, ere too late it be,
Lest thy three true friends grow weary
Of comforting thee! ”

The Pilgrim crouches terrified
As stooping hood, and glassy face,
Gloating, evil, side by side,
Terror and hate brood o’er the place;
He flings his withered hands on high
With a bitter, breaking cry: —
“Leave me, leave me, leave me, leave me,
Ye three wild fiends!
If I lay me down in slumber,
Then I lay me down in wrath;
If I stir not in dark dreaming,
Then I wither in my path;
If I hear sweet voices singing,
’Tis a demon’s lullaby:
And, in ‘hideous storm and terror,’
Wake but to die.”

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

And even as he spake, on high
Arrows of sunlight pierced the sky.
Bright streamed the rain. O'er burning snow
From hill to hill a wondrous bow
Of colour and fire trembled in air,
Painting its heavenly beauty there.
Wild flapped each fiend a batlike hood
Against that 'frighting light, and stood
Beating the windless rain, and then
Rose heavy and slow with cowering head,
Circled in company again,
And into darkness fled.

Marvellous sweet it was to hear
The waters gushing loud and clear;
Marvellous happy it was to be
Alone, and yet not solitary;
Oh, out of terror and dark to come
In sight of home!

THE GAGE

“**LADY JANE**, O Lady Jane!
Your hound hath broken bounds again,
And chased my timorous deer, O;
If him I see,
That hour he'll dee;
My brakes shall be his bier, O.”

“Hoots! lord, speak not so proud to me!
My hound, I trow, is fleet and free,
He's welcome to your deer, O;
Shoot, shoot you may,
He'll gang his way,
Your threats we nothing fear, O.”

He's fetched him in, he's laid him low,
Drips his lifeblood red and slow,
Darkens his dreary eye, O;
“Here is your beast,
And now at least
My herds in peace shall lie, O.”

“‘In peace!’ my lord, O mark me well!
For what my jolly hound befell
You shall sup twenty-fold, O!
For every tooth
Of his, in sooth,
A stag in pawn, I hold, O.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"Huntsman and horn, huntsman and horn,
Shall scour your heaths and coverts lorn,
 Braying 'em shrill and clear, O;
 But lone and still
 Shall lift each hill,
Each valley wan and sere, O.

"Ride up you may, ride down you may,
Lonely or trooped, by night or day,
 My hound shall haunt you ever:
 Bird, beast, and game
 Shall dread the same,
The wild fish of your river."

Her cheek burns angry as the rose,
Her eye with wrath and pity flows:
 He gazes fierce and round, O —
 "Dear Lord!" he says,
 " What loveliness
To waste upon a hound, O.

"I'd give my stags, my hills and dales,
My stormcocks and my nightingales
 To have undone this deed, O;
 For deep beneath
 My heart is death
Which for her love doth bleed, O."

He wanders up, he wanders down,
On foot, a-horse, by night and noon:

THE GAGE

His lands are bleak and drear, O;
Forsook his dales
Of nightingales,
Forsook his moors of deer, O.

Forsook his heart, ah me! of mirth;
There's nothing gladsome left on earth;
All thoughts and dreams seem vain, O,
Save where remote
The moonbeams gloat,
And sleeps the lovely Jane, O.

Until an even when lone he went,
Gnawing his beard in dreariment —
Lo! from a thicket hidden,
Lovely as flower
In April hour,
Steps forth a form unbidden.

“Get ye now down, my lord, to me!
I'm troubled so I'm like to dee,”
She cries, 'twixt joy and grief, O;
“The hound is dead,
When all is said,
But love is past belief, O.

“Nights, nights I've lain your lands to see,
Forlorn and still — and all for me,
All for a foolish curse, O;
Now here am I

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Come out to die —
To live unloved is worse, O! ”

In faith, this lord, in that lone dale,
Hears now a sweeter nightingale,
And lairs a tenderer deer, O;
His sorrow goes
Like mountain snows
In waters sweet and clear, O!

What ghostly hound is this that fleet
Comes fawning to his mistress' feet,
And courses round his master?
How swiftly love
May grief remove,
How happy make disaster!

Now here he smells, now there he smells,
Winding his voice along the dells,
Till grey flows up the morn, O
Then hies again
To Lady Jane
No longer now forlorn, O.

Ay, as it were a bud, did break
To loveliness for her love's sake,
So she in beauty moving
Rides at his hand
Across his land,
Beloved as well as loving.

AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

AS Lucy went a-walking one morning cold and
fine,
There sate three crows upon a bough, and three
times three is nine:
Then "O!" said Lucy, in the snow, "it's very plain
to see
A witch has been a-walking in the fields in front of
me."

Then stept she light and heedfully across the frozen
snow,
And plucked a bunch of elder-twigs that near a pool
did grow:
And, by and by, she comes to seven shadows in one
place
Stretched black by seven poplar-trees against the
sun's bright face.

She looks to left, she looks to right, and in the
midst she sees
A little pool of water clear and frozen 'neath the
trees;
Then down beside its margent in the crusty snow
she kneels,
And hears a magic belfry a-ringing with sweet bells.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Clear sang the faint far merry peal, then silence on
the air,
And icy-still the frozen pool and poplars standing
there:
Then lo! as Lucy turned her head and looked along
the snow
She sees a witch — a witch she sees, come frisking
to and fro.

Her scarlet, buckled shoes they clicked, her heels
a-twinkling high;
With mistletoe her steeple-hat bobbed as she capered
by;
But never a dint, or mark, or print, in the white-
ness for to see,
Though danced she high, though danced she fast,
though danced she lissomely.

It seemed 'twas diamonds in the air, or little flakes
of frost;
It seemed 'twas golden smoke around, or sunbeams
lightly tossed;
It seemed an elfin music like to reeds and warblers
rose:
“Nay!” Lucy said, “it is the wind that through
the branches flows.”

And as she peeps, and as she peeps, 'tis no more
one, but three,

AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

And eye of bat, and downy wing of owl within the
tree,
And the bells of that sweet belfry a-pealing as
before,
And now it is not three she sees, and now it is not
four—

“O! who are ye,” sweet Lucy cries, “that in a
dreadful ring,
All muffled up in brindled shawls, do caper, frisk,
and spring? ”
“A witch, and witches, one and nine,” they straight
to her reply,
And looked upon her narrowly, with green and
needle eye.

Then Lucy sees in clouds of gold green cherry trees
upgrow,
And bushes of red roses that bloomed above the
snow;
She smells, all faint, the almond-boughs blowing
so wild and fair,
And doves with milky eyes ascend fluttering in the
air.

Clear flowers she sees, like tulip buds, go floating
by like birds,
With wavering tips that warbled sweetly strange
enchanted words;

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

And, as with ropes of amethyst, the boughs with
lamps were hung,
And clusters of green emeralds like fruit upon them
clung.

“ O witches nine, ye dreadful nine, O witches seven
and three!

Whence come these wondrous things that I this
Christmas morning see? ”

But straight, as in a clap, when she of Christmas
says the word,

Here is the snow, and there the sun, but never bloom
nor bird;

Nor warbling flame, nor gloaming-rope of amethyst
there shows,

Nor bunches of green emeralds, nor belfry, well,
and rose,

Nor cloud of gold, nor cherry-tree, nor witch in
brindled shawl,

But like a dream that vanishes, so vanished were
they all.

When Lucy sees, and only sees three crows upon a
bough,

And earthly twigs, and bushes hidden white in
driven snow,

Then “ O! ” said Lucy, “ three times three is nine —
I plainly see

Some witch has been a-walking in the fields in
front of me.”

THE ENGLISHMAN

I MET a sailor in the woods,
A silver ring wore he,
His hair hung black, his eyes shone blue,
And thus he said to me: —

“What country, say, of this round earth,
What shore of what salt sea,
Be this, my son, I wander in,
And looks so strange to me? ”

Says I, “O foreign sailorman,
In England now you be,
This is her wood, and there her sky,
And that her roaring sea.”

He lifts his voice yet louder,
“What smell be this,” says he,
“My nose on the sharp morning air
Snuffs up so greedily? ”

Says I, “It is wild roses
Do smell so winsomely,
And winy briar, too,” says I,
“That in these thickets be.”

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"And oh!" says he, "what leetle bird
Is singing in yon high tree,
So every shrill and long-drawn note
Like bubbles breaks in me?"

Says I, "It is the mavis
That perches in the tree,
And sings so shrill, and sings so sweet,
When dawn comes up the sea."

At which he fell a-musing,
And fixed his eye on me,
As one alone 'twixt light and dark
A spirit thinks to see.

"England!" he whispers soft and harsh,
"England!" repeated he,
"And briar, and rose, and mavis,
A-singing in yon high tree.

"Ye speak me true, my leetle son,
So — so, it came to me,
A-drifting landwards on a spar,
And grey dawn on the sea.

"Ay, ay, I could not be mistook;
I knew them leafy trees,
I knew that land so witchery sweet,
And that old noise of seas.

THE ENGLISHMAN

“ Though here I’ve sailed a score of years,
And heard ’em, dream or wake,
Lap small and hollow ’gainst my cheek,
On sand and coral break;

“ ‘ Yet now,’ my leetle son, says I,
A-drifting on the wave,
‘ That land I see so safe and green,
Is England, I believe.

“ ‘ And that there wood is English wood,
And this here cruel sea,
The selfsame old blue ocean
Years gone remembers me.

“ ‘ A-sitting with my bread and butter
Down ahind yon chitterin’ mill;
And this same Marinere’— (that’s me),
‘ Is that same leetle Will! —

“ ‘ That very same wee leetle Will
Eating his bread and butter there,
A-looking on the broad blue sea
Betwixt his yaller hair! ’

“ And here be I, my son, thrown up
Like corpses from the sea,
Ships, stars, winds, tempests, pirates past,
Yet leetle Will I be! ”

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

**He said no more, that sailorman,
But in a reverie
Stared like the figure of a ship
With painted eyes to sea.**

THE PHANTOM

“UPSTAIRS in the large closet, child,
This side the blue room door,
Is an old Bible, bound in leather,
Standing upon the floor;

“Go with this taper, bring it me;
Carry it so, upon your arm;
It is the book on many a sea
Hath stilled the waves’ alarm.”

Late the hour, dark the night,
The house is solitary;
Feeble is a taper’s light
To light poor Ann to see.

Her eyes are yet with visions bright
Of sylph and river, flower and fay,
Now through a narrow corridor
She goes her lonely way.

Vast shadows on the heedless walls
Gigantic loom, stoop low:
Each little hasty footfall calls
Hollowly to and fro.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

In the cold solitude her heart
Remembers sorrowfully
White winters when her mother was
Her loving company.

Now in the dark clear glass she sees
A taper, mocking hers, —
A phantom face of light blue eyes,
Reflecting phantom fears.

Around her loom the vacant rooms,
Wind the upward stairs,
She climbs on into a loneliness
Only her taper shares.

Out in the dark a cold wind stirs,
At every window sighs;
A waning moon peers small and chill
From out the cloudy skies,

Casting faint tracery on the walls;
So stony still the house
From cellar to attic rings the shrill
Squeak of the hungry mouse.

Her grandmother is deaf with age;
A garden of moonless trees
Would answer not though she should cry
In anguish on her knees.

THE PHANTOM

So that she scarce can breathe — so fast
Her pent up heart doth beat —
When, faint along the corridor,
Falleth the sound of feet: —

Sounds lighter than silk slippers make
Upon a ballroom floor, when sweet
Violin and 'cello wake
Music for twirling feet.

O! 'neath an old unfriendly roof,
What shapes may not conceal
Their faces in the open day,
At night abroad to steal?

Even her taper seems with fear
To languish small and blue;
Far in the woods the winter wind
Runs whistling through.

A dreadful cold plucks at each hair,
Her mouth is stretched to cry,
But sudden, with a gush of joy,
It narrows to a sigh.

It is a phantom child which comes
Soft through the corridor,
Singing an old forgotten song,
This ancient burden bore: —

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"Thorn, thorn, I wis,
And roses twain,
A red rose and a white,
Stoop in the blossom, bee, and kiss
A lonely child good-night.

"Swim fish, sing bird,
And sigh again,
I that am lost am lone,
Bee in the blossom never stirred
Locks hid beneath a stone! "—

Her eye was of the azure fire
That hovers in wintry flame;
Her raiment wild and yellow as furze
That spouteth out the same;

And in her hand she bore no flower,
But on her head a wreath
Of faded flowers that did yet
Smell sweetly after death. . . .

Gloomy with night the listening walls
Are now that she is gone,
Albeit this solitary child
No longer seems alone.

Fast though her taper dwindles down,
Heavy and thick the tome,

THE PHANTOM

A beauty beyond fear to dim
Haunts now her alien home.

Ghosts in the world, malignant, grim,
Vex many a wood and glen,
And house and pool — the unquiet ghosts
Of dead and restless men.

But in her grannie's house this spirit —
A child as lone as she —
Pining for love not found on earth,
Ann dreams again to see.

Seated upon her tapestry stool,
Her fairy-book laid by,
She gazes into the fire, knowing
She has sweet company.

THE MILLER AND HIS SON

A TWANGLING harp for Mary,
A silvery flute for John,
And now we'll play, the livelong day,
"The Miller and his Son." . . .

"The Miller went a-walking
All in the forest high,
He sees three doves a-flitting
Against the dark blue sky:

"Says he, 'My son, now follow
These doves so white and free,
That cry above the forest,
And surely cry to thee.'

"I go, my dearest Father,
But O! I sadly fear,
These doves so white will lead me far,
But never bring me near.'

"He kisses the Miller,
He cries, 'Awhoop to ye!'
And straightway through the forest
Follows the wood-doves three.

THE MILLER AND HIS SON

"There came a sound of weeping
To the Miller in his Mill:
Red roses in a thicket
Bloomed over near his wheel;

"Three stars shone wild and brightly
Above the forest dim:
But never his dearest son
Returns again to him.

"The cuckoo shall call 'Cuckoo!'
In vain along the vale —
The linnet, and the blackbird,
The mournful nightingale;

"The Miller hears and sees not,
Thinking of his son;
His toppling wheel is silent;
His grinding done.

" 'You doves so white,' he weepeth,
 'You roses on the tree,
You stars that shine so brightly,
You shine in vain for me!

" 'I bade him follow, follow!'
He said, 'O Father dear,
These doves so white will lead me far
But never bring me near.' " . . .

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

**A twangling harp for Mary,
A silvery flute for John,
And now we'll play, the livelong day,
"The Miller and his Son."**

DOWN-ADOWN-DERRY

DOWN-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon,
Gathering daisies
In the meadows of Doone,
Hears a shrill piping,
Elflike and free,
Where the waters go brawling
In rills to the sea;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon,
Through the green grasses
Peeps softly; and soon
Spies under green willows
A fairy whose song
Like the smallest of bubbles
Floats bobbing along;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Her cheeks were like wine,
Her eyes in her wee face
Like water-sparks shine,

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Her niminy fingers
Her sleep tresses preen,
The which in the combing
She peeps out between;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Shrill, shrill was her tune: —
“Come to my water-house,
Annie Maroon:
Come in your dimity,
Ribbon on head,
To wear siller seaweed
And coral instead ”;
Singing down-adown-derry.

“Down-adown-derry,
Lean fish of the sea,
Bring lanthorns for feasting
The gay Faërie;
’Tis sand for the dancing,
A music all sweet
In the water-green gloaming
For thistledown feet ”;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon
Looked large on the fairy
Curled wan as the moon;

DOWN-ADOWN-DERRY

And all the grey ripples
To the Mill racing by,
With harps and with timbrels
Did ringing reply;
Singing down-adown-derry.

“Down-adown-derry,”
Sang the Fairy of Doone,
Piercing the heart
Of sweet Annie Maroon;
And lo! when like roses
The clouds of the sun
Faded at dusk, gone
Was Annie Maroon;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
The daisies are few;
Frost twinkles powdery
In haunts of the dew;
And only the robin
Perched on a thorn,
Can comfort the heart
Of a father forlorn;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
There's snow in the air;
Ice where the lily
Bloomed waxen and fair;

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

**He may call o'er the water,
Cry — cry through the Mill,
But Annie Maroon, alas!
Answer ne'er will;
Singing down-adown-derry.**

THE SUPPER

A WOLF he pricks with eyes of fire
Across the night's o'ercrusted snows,
 Seeking his prey,
 He pads his way
Where Jane benighted goes,
 Where Jane benighted goes.

He curdles the bleak air with ire,
Ruffling his hoary raiment through,
 And lo! he sees
 Beneath the trees
Where Jane's light footsteps go,
 Where Jane's light footsteps go.

No hound peals thus in wicked joy,
He snaps his muzzle in the snows,
 His five-clawed feet
 Do scamper fleet
Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows,
 Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows.

Now his greed's green doth gaze unseen
On a pure face of wilding rose,
 Her amber eyes

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

In fear's surprise
Watch largely as she goes,
Watch largely as she goes.

Salt wells his hunger in his jaws,
H's lust it revels to and fro,
Yet small beneath
A soft voice saith,
"Jane shall in safety go,
Jane shall in safety go."

He lurched as if a fiery lash
Had scourged his hide, and through and through
His furious eyes
O'erscanned the skies,
But nearer dared not go,
But nearer dared not go.

He reared like wild Bucephalus,
His fangs like spears in him uprose,
Even to the town
Jane's flitting gown
He grins on as she goes,
He grins on as she goes.

In fierce lament he howls amain,
He scampers, marvelling in his throes
What brought him there
To sup on air,
While Jane unharmed goes,
While Jane unharmed goes.

THE ISLE OF LONE

THREE dwarfs there were which lived in an isle,
And the name of that Isle was Lone,
And the names of the dwarfs were Alliolyle,
Lallerie, Muziomone.

Alliolyle was green of een,
Lallerie light of locks,
Muziomone was mild of mien,
As ewes in April flocks.

Their house was small and sweet of the sea,
And pale as the Malmsey wine;
Their bowls were three, and their beds were three,
And their nightcaps white were nine.

Their beds they were made of the holly-wood,
Their combs of the tortoise's shell,
Three basins of silver in corners there stood,
And three little ewers as well.

Green rushes, green rushes lay thick on the floor,
For light beamed a gobbet of wax;
There were three wooden stools for whatever they
wore
On their humpity-dumpity backs.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

So each would lie on a drowsy pillow
And watch the moon in the sky —
And hear the parrot scream to the billow,
The billow roar reply:

Parrots of sapphire and sulphur and amber,
Scarlet, and flame, and green,
While five-foot apes did scramble and clamber,
In the feathery-tufted treen.

All night long with bubbles a-glisten
The ocean cried under the moon,
Till ape and parrot, too sleepy to listen,
To sleep and slumber were gone.

Then from three small beds the dark hours' while
In a house in the Island of Lone
Rose the snoring of Lallerie, Alliolyle,
The snoring of Muziomone.

But soon as ever came peep of sun
On coral and feathery tree,
Three night-capped dwarfs to the surf would run
And soon were a-bob in the sea.

At six they went fishing, at nine they snared
Young foxes in the dells,
At noon on sweet berries and honey they fared,
And blew in their twisted shells.

THE ISLE OF LONE

Dark was the sea they gambolled in,
And thick with silver fish,
Dark as green glass blown clear and thin
To be a monarch's dish.

They sate to sup in a jasmine bower,
Lit pale with flies of fire,
Their bowls the hue of the iris-flower,
And lemon their attire.

Sweet wine in little cups they sipped,
And golden honeycomb
Into their bowls of cream they dipped,
Whipt light and white as foam.

Now Alliolyle, where the sand-flower blows,
Taught three old apes to sing —
Taught three old apes to dance on their toes
And caper around in a ring.

They yelled them hoarse and they croaked them
sweet,
They twirled them about and around,
To the noise of their voices they danced with their
feet,
They stamped with their feet on the ground.

But down to the shore skipped Lallerie,
His parrot on his thumb,

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

And the twain they scritch'd in mockery,
While the dancers go and come.

And, alas! in the evening, rosy and still,
Light-haired Lallerie
Bitterly quarrelled with Alliolyle
By the yellow-sanded sea.

The rising moon swam sweet and large
Before their furious eyes,
And they rolled and rolled to the coral marge
Where the surf for ever cries.

Too late, too late, comes Muziomone:
Clear in the clear green sea
Alliolyle lies not alone,
But clasped with Lallerie.

He blows on his shell plaintiff notes;
Ape, parraquito, bee
Flock where a shoe on the salt wave floats,—
The shoe of Lallerie.

He fetches nightcaps, one and nine,
Grey apes he dowers three,
His house as fair as the Malmsey wine
Seems sad as cypress-tree.

Three bowls he brims with sweet honeycomb
To feast the bumble bees,

THE ISLE OF LONE

Saying, "O bees, be this your home,
For grief is on the seas!"

He sate him lone in a coral grot,
At the flowing in of the tide;
When ebb'd the billow, there was not,
Save coral, aught beside.

So hairy apes in three white beds,
And nightcaps, one and nine,
On moonlit pillows lay three heads
Bemused with dwarfish wine.

A tomb of coral, the dirge of bee,
The grey apes' guttural groan
For Alliolyle, for Lallerie,
For thee, O Muziomone!

SLEEPING BEAUTY

THE scent of bramble fills the air,
Amid her folded sheets she lies,
The gold of evening in her hair,
The blue of morn shut in her eyes.

How many a changing moon hath lit
The unchanging roses of her face!
Her mirror ever broods on it
In silver stillness of the days.

Oft flits the moth on filmy wings
Into his solitary lair;
Shrill evensong the cricket sings
From some still shadow in her hair.

In heat, in snow, in wind, in flood,
She sleeps in lovely loneliness,
Half-folded like an April bud
On winter-haunted trees.

THE HORN

HARK! is that a horn I hear,
In cloudland winding sweet —
And bell-like clash of bridle-rein,
And silver-shod light feet?

Is it the elfin laughter
Of fairies riding faint and high,
Beneath the branches of the moon,
Straying through the starry sky?

Is it in the globèd dew
Such sweet melodies may fall?
Wood and valley — all are still,
Hushed the shepherd's call.

CAPTAIN LEAN

OUT of the East a hurricane
Swept down on Captain Lean —
That mariner and gentleman
Will never again be seen.

He sailed his ship against the foes
Of his own country dear,
But now in the trough of the billows
An aimless course doth steer.

Powder was violets to his nostrils,
Sweet the din of the fighting-line,
Now he is flotsam on the seas,
And his bones are bleached with brine.

The stars move up along the sky,
The moon she shines so bright,
And in that solitude the foam
Sparkles unearthly white.

This is the tomb of Captain Lean,
Would a straiter please his soul?
I trow he sleeps in peace,
Howsoever the billows roll!

THE PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR

HIS brow is seamed with line and scar;
His cheek is red and dark as wine;
The fires as of a Northern star
Beneath his cap of sable shine.

His right hand, bared of leathern glove,
Hangs open like an iron gin,
You stoop to see his pulses move,
To hear the blood sweep out and in.

He looks some king, so solitary
In earnest thought he seems to stand,
As if across a lonely sea
He gazed impatient of the land.

Out of the noisy centuries
The foolish and the fearful fade;
Yet burn unquenched these warrior eyes,
Time hath not dimmed, nor death dismayed.

HAUNTED

FROM out the wood I watched them shine,—
The windows of the haunted house,
Now ruddy as enchanted wine,
Now dark as flittermouse.

There went a thin voice piping airs
Along the grey and crooked walks,—
A garden of thistledown and tares,
Bright leaves, and giant stalks.

The twilight rain shone at its gates,
Where long-leaved grass in shadow grew;
And black in silence to her mates
A voiceless raven flew.

Lichen and moss the lone stones greened,
Green paths led lightly to its door,
Keen from her hair the spider leaned,
And dusk to darkness wore.

Amidst the sedge a whisper ran,
The West shut down a heavy eye,
And like last tapers, few and wan,
The watch-stars kindled in the sky.

THE RAVEN'S TOMB

BUILD me my tomb," the Raven said,
 "Within the dark yew-tree,
So in the Autumn yewberries
 Sad lamps may burn for me.
Summon the haunted beetle,
 From twilight bud and bloom,
To drone a gloomy dirge for me
 At dusk above my tomb.
Beseech ye too the glowworm
 To rear her cloudy flame,
Where the small, flickering bats resort,
 Whistling in tears my name.
Let the round dew a whisper make,
 Welling on twig and thorn;
And only the grey cock at night
 Call through his silver horn.
And you, dear sisters, don your black
 For ever and a day,
To show how true a raven
 In his tomb is laid away."

THE CHRISTENING

THE bells chime clear,
Soon will the sun behind the hills sink down;
Come, little Ann, your baby brother dear
Lies in his christening-gown.

His godparents,
Are all across the fields stepped on before,
And wait beneath the crumbling monuments,
This side the old church door.

Your mammie dear
Leans frail and lovely on your daddie's arm;
Watching her chick, 'twixt happiness and fear,
Lest he should come to harm.

All to be blest
Full soon in the clear heavenly water, he
Sleeps on unwitting of it, his little breast
Heaving so tenderly.

I carried you,
My little Ann, long since on this same quest,
And from the painted windows a pale hue
Lit golden on your breast;

THE CHRISTENING

And then you woke,
Chill as the holy water trickled down,
And, weeping, cast the window a strange look,
Half smile, half infant frown.

I scarce could hear
The shrill larks singing in the green meadows,
'Twas summertime, and, budding far and near,
The hedges thick with rose.

And now you're grown
A little girl, and this same helpless mite
Is come like such another bud half-grown,
Out of the wintry night.

Time flies, time flies!
And yet, bless me! 'tis little changed am I;
May Jesu keep from tears those infant eyes,
Be love their lullaby!

THE FUNERAL

THEY dressed us up in black,
Susan and Tom and me —
And, walking through the fields
All beautiful to see,
With branches high in the air
And daisy and buttercup,
We heard the lark in the clouds —
In black dressed up.

They took us to the graves,
Susan and Tom and me,
Where the long grasses grow
And the funeral tree:
We stood and watched; and the wind
Came softly out of the sky
And blew in Susan's hair,
As I stood close by.

Back through the fields we came,
Tom and Susan and me,
And we sat in the nursery together,
And had our tea.
And, looking out of the window,
I heard the thrushes sing;
But Tom fell asleep in his chair,
He was so tired, poor thing.

THE MOTHER BIRD

THROUGH the green twilight of a hedge
I peered, with cheek on the cool leaves pressed,
And spied a bird upon a nest:
Two eyes she had beseeching me
Meekly and brave, and her brown breast
Throbbled hot and quick above her heart;
And then she opened her dagger bill,—
'Twas not a chirp, as sparrows pipe
At break of day; 'twas not a trill,
As falters through the quiet even;
But one sharp solitary note,
One desperate, fierce, and vivid cry
Of valiant tears, and hopeless joy,
One passionate note of victory;
Off, like a fool afraid, I sneaked,
Smiling the smile the fool smiles best,
At the mother bird in the secret hedge
Patient upon her lonely nest.

THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES TO BED

I PRYTHER, Nurse, come smooth my hair,
And prythee, Nurse, unloose my shoe,
And trimly turn my silken sheet
Upon my quilt of gentle blue.

My pillow sweet of lavender
Smooth with an amiable hand,
And may the dark pass peacefully by
As in the hour-glass droops the sand.

Prepare my cornered manchet sweet,
And in my little crystal cup
Pour out the blithe and flowering mead
That forthwith I may sup.

Withdraw my curtains from the night,
And let the crispèd crescent shine
Upon my eyelids while I sleep,
And soothe me with her beams benign.

Dark looks the forest far-away;
O, listen! through its empty dales
Rings from the solemn echoing boughs
The music of its nightingales.

THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES TO BED

Now quench my silver lamp, prythee,
And bid the harpers harp that tune
Fairies which haunt the meadowlands
Sing clearly to the stars of June.

And bid them play, though I in dreams
No longer heed their pining strains,
For I would not to silence wake
When slumber o'er my senses wanes.

You Angels bright who me defend,
Enshadow me with curvèd wing,
And keep me in the darksome night
Till dawn another day do bring.

THE LAMPLIGHTER

WHEN the light of day declines,
And a swift angel through the sky
Kindles God's tapers clear,
With ashen staff the lamplighter
Passes along the darkling streets
To light our earthly lamps;

Lest, prowling in the darkness,
The thief should haunt with quiet tread,
Or men on evil errands set;
Or wayfarers be benighted;
Or neighbors, bent from house to house,
Should need a guiding torch.

He is like a needlewoman
Who deftly on a sable hem
Stitches in gleaming jewels;
Or, haply, he is like a hero,
Whose bright deeds on the long journey
Are beacons on our way.

And when in the East comes morning,
And the broad splendour of the sun,
Then, with the tune of little birds

THE LAMPLIGHTER

Rings on high, the lamplighter
Passes by each quiet house,
And he puts out the lamps.

I MET AT EVE

I MET at eve the Prince of Sleep,
His was a still and lovely face,
He wandered through a valley steep,
Lovely in a lonely place.

His garb was grey of lavender,
About his brows a poppy-wreath
Burned like dim coals, and everywhere
The air was sweeter for his breath.

His twilight feet no sandals wore,
His eyes shone faint in their own flame,
Fair moths that gloomed his steps before
Seemed letters of his lovely name.

His house is in the mountain ways,
A phantom house of misty walls,
Whose golden flocks at evening graze,
And witch the moon with muffled calls.

Upwelling from his shadowy springs
Sweet waters shake a trembling sound,
There flit the hoot-owl's silent wings,
There hath his web the silkworm wound.

I MET AT EVE

Dark in his pools clear visions lurk,
And rosy, as with morning buds,
Along his dales of broom and birk
Dreams haunt his solitary woods.

I met at eve the Prince of Sleep,
His was a still and lovely face,
He wandered through a valley steep,
Lovely in a lonely place.

LULLABY

SLEEP, sleep, lovely white soul;
The little mouse cheeps plaintively,
The night-bird in the chestnut-tree —
They sing together, bird and mouse,
In starlight, in darkness, lonely, sweet,
The wild notes and the faint notes meet —
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul;
Amid the lilies floats the moth,
The mole along his galleries goeth
In the dark earth; the summer moon
Looks like a shepherd through the pane
Seeking his feeble lamp again —
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul;
Time comes to keep night-watch with thee,
Nodding with roses; and the sea
Saith "Peace! Peace!" amid his foam.
"O be still!"
The wind cries up the whispering hill —
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

ENVOI

CHILD, do you love the flower
Ashine with colour and dew
Lighting its transient hour?
So I love you.

The lambs in the mead are at play,
'Neath a hurdle the shepherd's asleep;
From height to height of the day
The sunbeams sweep.

Evening will come. And alone
The dreamer the dark will beguile;
All the world will be gone
For a dream's brief while.

Then I shall be old; and away:
And you, with sad joy in your eyes,
Will brood over children at play
With as loveful surmise.

PEACOCK PIE
A BOOK OF RHYMES



UP AND DOWN

THE HORSEMAN

I HEARD a horseman
Ride over the hill;
The moon shone clear,
The night was still;
His helm was silver,
And pale was he;
And the horse he rode
Was of ivory.

MRS. EARTH

MR. EARTH makes silver black,
Mrs. Earth makes iron red,
But Mrs. Earth can not stain gold,
Nor ruby red.
Mrs. Earth the slenderest bone
Whitens in her bosom cold,
But Mrs. Earth can change my dreams
No more than ruby or gold.
Mrs. Earth and Mr. Sun
Can tan my skin, and tire my toes,
But all that I'm thinking of, ever shall think,
Why, neither knows.

ALAS, ALACK!

ANN, Ann!

Come! quick as you can!

There's a fish that *talks*

In the frying-pan.

Out of the fat,

As clear as glass,

He put up his mouth

And moaned "Alas!"

Oh, most mournful,

"Alas, alack!"

Then turned to his sizzling,

And sank him back.

TIRED TIM

Poor tired Tim! It's sad for him.
He lags the long bright morning through,
Ever so tired of nothing to do;
He moons and mopes the livelong day,
Nothing to think about, nothing to say;
Up to bed with his candle to creep,
Too tired to yawn, too tired to sleep:
Poor tired Tim! It's sad for him

MIMA

JEMIMA is my name,
But oh, I have another:
My father always calls me Meg,
And so do Bob and mother;
Only my sister, jealous of
The strands of my bright hair,
"Jemima — Mima — Mima!"
Calls, mocking, up the stair.

THE HUNTSMEN

THREE jolly gentlemen,
In coats of red,
Rode their horses
Up to bed.

Three jolly gentlemen
Snored till morn,
Their horses champing
The golden corn.

Three jolly gentlemen,
At break of day,
Came clitter-clatter down the stairs
And galloped away.

THE BANDOG

HAS anybody seen my Mopser? —

A comely dog is he,
With hair of the colour of a Charles the Fifth
And teeth like ships at sea,
His tail it curls straight upwards,
His ears stand two abreast,
And he answers to the simple name of Mopser,
When civilly addressed.

I CAN'T ABEAR

I CAN'T abear a butcher,
I can't abide his meat,
The ugliest shop of all is his,
The ugliest in the street;
Bakers' are warm, cobblers' dark,
Chemists' burn watery lights;
But oh, the sawdust butcher's shop,
That ugliest of sights!

THE DUNCE

WHY does he still keep ticking?

Why does his round white face
Stare at me over the books and ink,
And mock at my disgrace?

Why does that thrush call, "Dunce, dunce,
dunce! "?

Why does that bluebottle buzz?
Why does the sun so silent shine? —
And what do I care if it does?

CHICKEN

CLAPPING her platter stood plump Bess,
And all across the green
Came scampering in, on wing and claw,
Chicken fat and lean: —
Dorking, Spaniard, Cochin China,
Bantams sleek and small,
Like feathers blown in a great wind,
They came at Bessie's call.

SOME ONE

SOME one came knocking
At my wee, small door;
Some one came knocking,
I'm sure — sure — sure;
I listened, I opened,
I looked to left and right,
But nought there was a-stirring
In the still dark night;
Only the busy beetle
Tap-tapping in the wall,
Only from the forest
The screech-owl's call,
Only the cricket whistling
While the dewdrops fall,
So I know not who came knocking,
At all, at all, at all.

BREAD AND CHERRIES

“CHERRIES, ripe cherries! ”

The old woman cried,
In her snowy white apron,
And basket beside;
And the little boys came,
Eyes shining, cheeks red,
To buy bags of cherries
To eat with their bread.

OLD SHELLOVER

"COME!" said Old Shellover.

"What?" says Creep.

"The horny old Gardener's fast asleep;

The fat cock Thrush

To his nest has gone,

And the dew shines bright

In the rising Moon;

Old Sallie Worm from her hole doth peep;

Come!" said Old Shellover.

"Ay!" said Creep.

HAPLESS

HAPLESS, hapless, I must be
All the hours of life I see,
Since my foolish nurse did once
Bed me on her leggen bones;
Since my mother did not weel
To snip my nails with blades of steel.
Had they laid me on a pillow
In a cot of water willow,
Had they bitten finger and thumb,
Not to such ill hap I had come.

THE LITTLE BIRD

MY dear Daddie bought a mansion
For to bring my Mammie to,
In a hat with a long feather,
And a trailing gown of blue;
And a company of fiddlers
And a rout of maids and men
Danced the clock round to the morning,
In a gay house-warming then.
And when all the guests were gone, and
All was still as still can be,
In from the dark ivy hopped a
Wee small bird: and that was Me.

CAKE AND SACK

OLD King Caraway
Supped on cake,
And a cup of sack
His thirst to slake;
Bird in arras
And hound in hall
Watched very softly
Or not at all;
Fire in the middle,
Stone all round
Changed not, heeded not,
Made no sound;
All by himself
At the Table High
He'd nibble and sip
While his dreams slipped by;
And when he had finished,
He'd nod and say,
"Cake and sack
For King Caraway!"

THE SHIP OF RIO

THERE was a ship of Rio
Sailed out into the blue,
And nine and ninety monkeys
Were all her jovial crew.
From bos'un to the cabin boy,
From quarter to caboose,
There weren't a stitch of calico
To breech 'em — tight or loose;
From spar to deck, from deck to keel,
From barnacle to shroud,
There weren't one pair of reach-me-downs
To all that jabbering crowd.
But wasn't it a gladsome sight,
When roared the deep-sea gales,
To see them reef her fore and aft,
A-swinging by their tails!
Oh, wasn't it a gladsome sight,
When glassy calm did come,
To see them squatting tailor-wise
Around a keg of rum!
Oh, wasn't it a gladsome sight,
When in she sailed to land,
To see them all a-scampering skip
For nuts across the sand!

JIM JAY

Do diddle di do,
Poor Jim Jay
Got stuck fast
In Yesterday.
Squinting he was,
On cross-legs bent,
Never heeding
The wind was spent.
Round veered the weathercock,
The sun drew in —
And stuck was Jim
Like a rusty pin. . . .
We pulled and we pulled
From seven till twelve,
Jim, too frightened
To help himself.
But all in vain.
The clock struck one,
And there was Jim
A little bit gone.
At half-past five
You scarce could see
A glimpse of his flapping
Handkerchee.

JIM JAY

And when came noon,
And we climbed sky-high,
Jim was a speck
Slip-slipping by.
Come tomorrow,
The neighbours say,
He'll be past crying for;
Poor Jim Jay.

MISS T.

IT'S a very odd thing —
As odd as can be —
That whatever Miss T. eats
Turns into Miss T.;
Porridge and apples,
Mince, muffins and mutton,
Jam, junket, jumbles —
Not a rap, not a button
It matters; the moment
They're out of her plate,
Though shared by Miss Butcher
And sour Mr. Bate;
Tiny and cheerful,
And neat as can be,
Whatever Miss T. eats
Turns into Miss T.

THE CUPBOARD

I KNOW a little cupboard,
With a teeny tiny key,
And there's a jar of Lollypops
For me, me, me.

It has a little shelf, my dear,
As dark as dark can be,
And there's a dish of Banbury Cakes
For me, me, me.

I have a small fat grandmamma,
With a very slippery knee,
And she's Keeper of the Cupboard,
With a key, key, key.

And when I'm very good, my dear,
As good as good can be,
There's Banbury Cakes, and Lollypops
For me, me, me.

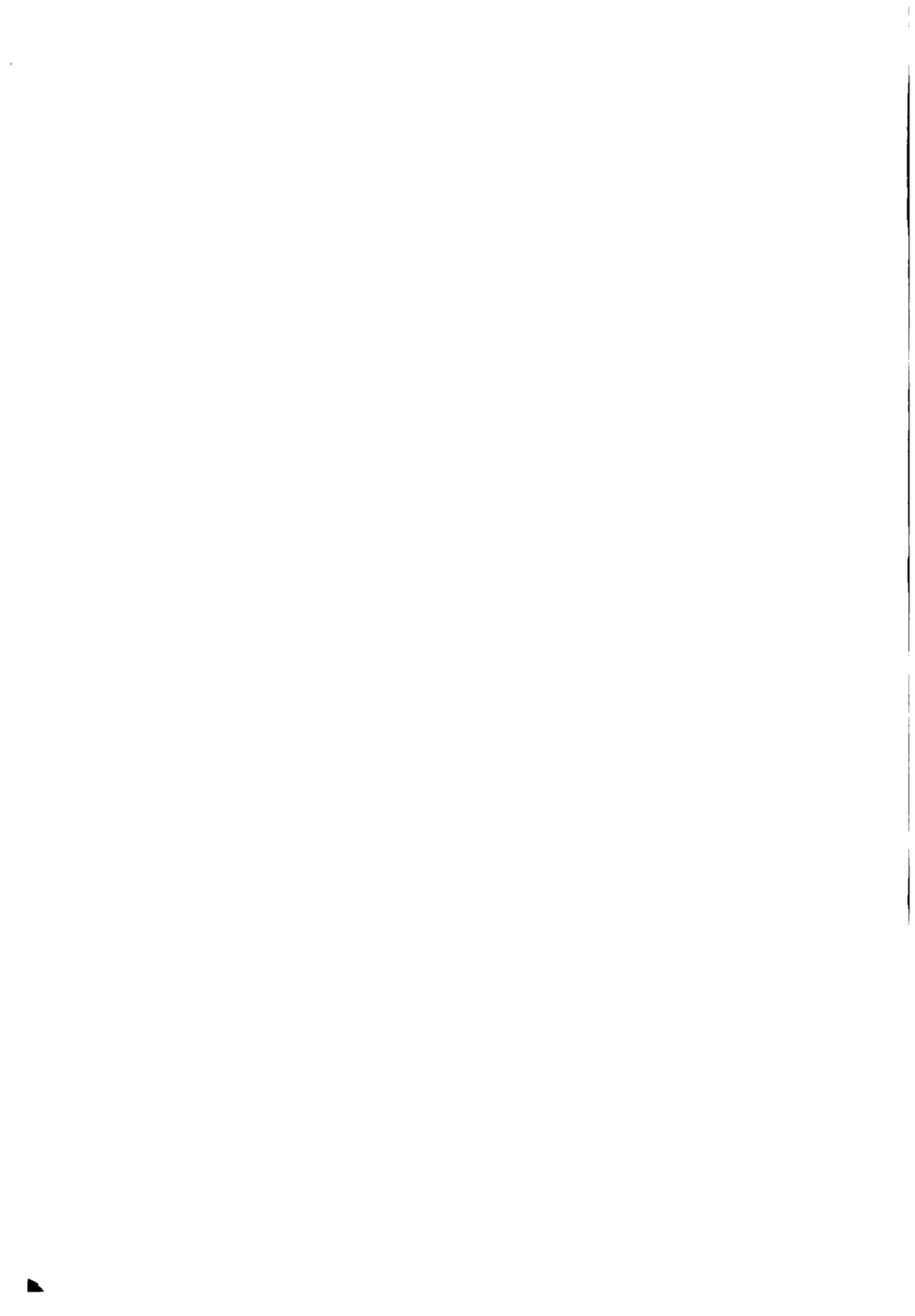
THE BARBER'S

GOLD locks, and black locks,
Red locks and brown,
Topknot to love-curl
The hair wisps down;
Straight above the clear eyes,
Rounded round the ears,
Snip-snap and snick-a-snick,
Clash the Barber's shears;
Us, in the looking-glass,
Footsteps in the street,
Over, under, to and fro,
The lean blades meet;
Bay Rum or Bear's Grease,
A silver groat to pay —
Then out a-shin-shan-shining
In the bright, blue day.

HIDE AND SEEK

HIDE and seek, says the Wind,
In the shade of the woods;
Hide and seek, says the Moon,
To the hazel buds;
Hide and seek, says the Cloud,
Star on to star;
Hide and seek, says the Wave
At the harbour bar;
Hide and seek, say I
To myself, and step
Out of the dream of Wake
Into the dream of Sleep.

BOYS AND GIRLS



THEN

TWENTY, forty, sixty, eighty,
A hundred years ago,
All through the night with lantern bright
The Watch trudged to and fro.
And little boys tucked snug abed
Would wake from dreams to hear —
“Two o’ the morning by the clock,
And the stars a-shining clear!”
Or, when across the chimney-tops
Screamed shrill a North-east gale,
A faint and shaken voice would shout,
“Three! and a storm of hail!”

THE WINDOW

BEHIND the blinds I sit and watch
The people passing — passing by;
And not a single one can see
My tiny watching eye.

They cannot see my little room,
All yellowed with the shaded sun;
They do not even know I am here;
Nor will guess when I am gone.

POOR HENRY

THICK in its glass
The physic stands,
Poor Henry lifts
Distracted hands;
His round cheek wans
In the candlelight,
To smell that smell!
To see that sight!

Finger and thumb
Clinch his small nose,
A gurgle, a gasp,
And down it goes;
Scowls Henry now;
But mark that cheek,
Sleek with the bloom
Of health next week!

FULL MOON

ONE night as Dick lay half asleep,
Into his drowsy eyes
A great still light began to creep
From out the silent skies.

It was the lovely moon's, for when
He raised his dreamy head,
Her surge of silver filled the pane
And streamed across his bed.

So, for awhile, each gazed at each —
Dick and the solemn moon —
Till, climbing slowly on her way,
She vanished, and was gone.

THE BOOKWORM

"I'M tired — Oh, tired of books," said Jack,
"I long for meadows green,
And woods where shadowy violets
Nod their cool leaves between;
I long to see the ploughman stride
His darkening acres o'er,
To hear the hoarse sea-waters drive
Their billows 'gainst the shore;
I long to watch the sea-mew wheel
Back to her rock-perched mate;
Or, where the breathing cows are housed,
Lean dreaming o'er the gate.
Something has gone, and ink and print
Will never bring it back;
I long for the green fields again,
I'm tired of books," said Jack.

THE QUARTETTE

TOM sang for joy and Ned sang for joy and old
Sam sang for joy;
All we four boys piped up loud, just like one boy;
And the ladies that sate with the Squire — their
checks were all wet,
For the noise of the voice of us boys, when we sang
our Quartette.

Tom he piped low and Ned he piped low and Sam
he piped low;
Into a sorrowful fall did our music flow;
And the ladies that sate with the Squire vowed
they'd never forget
How the eyes of them cried for delight, when we
sang our Quartette.

MISTLETOE

SITTING under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
One last candle burning low,
All the sleepy dancers gone,
Just one candle burning on,
Shadows lurking everywhere:
Some one came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go
Nodding under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen — and kissed me there.

THE LOST SHOE

Poor little Lucy
By some mischance,
Lost her shoe
As she did dance:
'Twas not on the stairs,
Not in the hall;
Not where they sat
At supper at all.
She looked in the garden,
But there it was not;
Henhouse, or kennel,
Or high dovecote.
Dairy and meadow,
And wild woods through
Showed not a trace
Of Lucy's shoe.
Bird nor bunny
Nor glimmering moon
Breathed a whisper
Of where 'twas gone.
It was cried and cried,
Oyez and Oyez!
In French, Dutch, Latin,
And Portuguese.

THE LOST SHOE

Ships the dark seas
Went plunging through,
But none brought news
Of Lucy's shoe;
And still she patters
In silk and leather,
O'er snow, sand, shingle,
In every weather;
Spain, and Africa,
Hindustan,
Java, China,
And lamped Japan;
Plain and desert,
She hops — hops through,
Pernambuco
To gold Peru;
Mountain and forest,
And river too,
All the world over
For her lost shoe.

THE TRUANTS

ERE my heart beats too coldly and faintly
To remember sad things, yet be gay,
I would sing a brief song of the world's little
children
Magic hath stolen away.

The primroses scattered by April,
The stars of the wide Milky Way,
Cannot outnumber the hosts of the children
Magic hath stolen away.

The buttercup green of the meadows,
The snow of the blossoming may,
Lovelier are not than the legions of children
Magic hath stolen away.

The waves tossing surf in the moonbeam,
The albatross lone on the spray,
Alone know the tears wept in vain for the children
Magic hath stolen away.

In vain: for at hush of the evening
When the stars twinkle into the grey,
Seems to echo the far-away calling of children
Magic hath stolen away.

FOUR QUEER TALES

BERRIES

THERE was an old woman
Went blackberry picking
Along the hedges
From Weep to Wicking.
Half a pottle —
No more she had got,
When out steps a Fairy
From her green grot;
And says, " Well, Jill,
Would 'ee pick 'ee mo? "
And Jill, she curtseys,
And looks just so.
" Be off," says the Fairy,
" As quick as you can,
Over the meadows
To the little green lane,
That dips to the hayfields
Of Farmer Grimes:
I've berried those hedges
A score of times;
Bushel on bushel
I'll promise 'ee, Jill,
This side of supper
If 'ee pick with a will."

FOUR QUEER TALES

She glints very bright,
And speaks her fair;
Then lo, and behold!
She has faded in air.

Be sure old Goodie
She trots betimes
Over the meadows
To Farmer Grimes.
And never was queen
With jewellery rich
As those same hedges
From twig to ditch;
Like Dutchmen's coffers,
Fruit, thorn, and flower —
They shone like William
And Mary's bower.
And be sure Old Goodie
Went back to Weep,
So tired with her basket
She scarce could creep.
When she comes in the dusk
To her cottage door,
There's Towser wagging
As never before,
To see his Missus
So glad to be
Come from her fruit-picking
Back to he.

BERRIES

As soon as next morning
Dawn was grey,
The pot on the hob
Was simmering away;
And all in a stew
And a hugger-mugger
Towser and Jill
A-boiling of sugar,
And the dark clear fruit
That from Faërie came,
For syrup and jelly
And blackberry jam.

Twelve jolly gallipots
Jill put by;
And one little teeny one,
One inch high;
And that she's hidden
A good thumb deep,
Half way over
From Wicking to Weep.

OFF THE GROUND

THREE jolly Farmers
Once bet a pound
Each dance the others would
Off the ground.
Out of their coats
They slipped right soon,
And neat and nicesome
Put each his shoon.
One — Two — Three! —
And away they go,
Not too fast,
And not too slow;
Out from the elm-tree's
Noonday shadow,
Into the sun
And across the meadow.
Past the schoolroom,
With knees well bent
Fingers a-flicking,
They dancing went.
Up sides and over,
And round and round,
They crossed click-clacking,
The Parish bound,

OFF THE GROUND

By Tupman's meadow
They did their mile,
Tee-to-tum
On a three-barred stile.
Then straight through Whipham,
Downhill to Week,
Footing it lightsome,
But not too quick,
Up fields to Watchet,
And on through Wye,
Till seven fine churches
They'd seen skip by —
Seven fine churches,
And five old mills,
Farms in the valley,
And sheep on the hills;
Old Man's Acre
And Dead Man's Pool
All left behind,
As they danced through Wool.
And Wool gone by,
Like tops that seem
To spin in sleep
They danced in dream:
Withy — Wellover —
Wassop — Wo —
Like an old clock
Their heels did go.
A league and a league
And a league they went,

FOUR QUEER TALES

And not one weary,
And not one spent.
And lo, and behold!
Past Willow-cum-Leigh
Stretched with its waters
The great green sea.
Says Farmer Bates,
"I puffs and I blows,
What's under the water,
Why, no man knows!"
Says Farmer Giles,
"My wind comes weak,
And a good man drowned
Is far to seek."
But Farmer Turvey,
On twirling toes
Up's with his gaiters,
And in he goes:
Down where the mermaids
Pluck and play
On their twangling harps
In a sea-green day;
Down where the mermaids,
Finned and fair,
Sleek with their combs
Their yellow hair. . . .
Bates and Giles —
On the shingle sat,
Gazing at Turvey's
Floating hat.

OFF THE GROUND

But never a ripple
Nor bubble told
Where he was supping
Off plates of gold.
Never an echo
Rilled through the sea
Of the feasting and dancing
And minstrelsy.
They called — called — called:
Came no reply:
Nought but the ripples'
Sandy sigh.
Then glum and silent
They sat instead,
Vacantly brooding
On home and bed,
Till both together
Stood up and said: —
“Us knows not, dreams not,
Where you be,
Turvey, unless
In the deep blue sea;
But excusing silver —
And it comes most willing —
Here's us two paying
Our forty shilling;
For it's sartin sure, Turvey,
Safe and sound,
You danced us square, Turvey,
Off the ground!”

THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE

THERE came a Thief one night to Robin's Castle,
He climbed up into a Tree;
And sitting with his head among the branches,
A wondrous Sight did see.

For there was Robin supping at his table,
With Candles of pure Wax,
His Dame and his two beauteous little Children,
With Velvet on their backs.

Platters for each there were shin-shining,
Of Silver many a pound,
And all of beaten Gold, three brimming Goblets,
Standing the table round.

The smell that rose up richly from the Baked Meats
Came thinning amid the boughs,
And much that greedy Thief who snuffed the night
air —
His Hunger did arouse.

He watched them eating, drinking, laughing,
talking,
Busy with finger and spoon,

THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE

While three most cunning Fiddlers, clad in crimson,
Played them a Supper Tune.

And he waited in the tree-top like a Starling,
Till the Moon was gotten low;
When all the windows in the walls were darkened
He softly in did go.

There Robin and his Dame in bed were sleeping,
And his Children young and fair;
Only Robin's Hounds from their warm kennels
Yelped as he climbed the stair.

All, all were sleeping, Page and Fiddler,
Cook, Scullion, free from care;
Only Robin's Stallions from their stables
Neighed as he climbed the stair.

A wee wan light the Moon did shed him,
Hanging above the Sea,
And he counted into his bag (of beaten Silver)
Platters thirty-three.

Of Spoons three score; of jolly golden Goblets
He stowed in four save one,
And six fine seven-branched Cupid Candlesticks,
Before his work was done.

Nine bulging bags of Money in a cupboard,
Two Snuffers, and a Dish

FOUR QUEER TALES

He found, the last all studded with great Garnets
And shapen like a Fish.

Then tiptoe up he stole into a Chamber,
Where on Tasselled Pillows lay
Robin and his Dame in dreaming slumber,
Tired with the summer's day.

That Thief he mimbled round him in the gloaming,
Their Treasures for to spy,
Combs, Brooches, Chains, and Rings, and Pins and
Buckles
All higgledy piggledy.

A Watch shaped in the shape of a flat Apple
In purest Crystal set,
He lifted from the hook where it was ticking
And crammed in his Pochette.

He heaped the pretty Baubles on the table,
Trinkets, Knick-knackerie,
Pearls, Diamonds, Sapphires, Topazes, and
Opals —
All in his bag put he.

And there in night's pale gloom was Robin
dreaming
He was hunting the mountain Bear,
While his Dame in peaceful slumber in no wise
heeded
A greedy Thief was there.

THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE

And that ravenous Thief he climbed up even
higher,
Till into a chamber small
He crept where lay poor Robin's beauteous
Children,
Lovelier in sleep withal.

Oh, fairer was their hair than gold of Goblet,
Beyond Silver their cheeks did shine,
And their little hands that lay upon the linen
Made that Thief's hard heart to pine.

But though a moment there his hard heart faltered,
Eftsoones he took them twain,
And slipped them into his Bag with all his Plunder,
And soft stole down again.

Spoon, Platter, Goblet, Ducats, Dishes, Trinkets,
And those two Children dear,
A-quaking in the clinking and the clanking,
And half bemused with fear,

He carried down the stairs into the Courtyard,
But there he made no stay,
He just tied up his Garters, took a deep breath,
And ran like the wind away.

Past Forest, River, Mountain, River, Forest —
He coursed the whole night through,

FOUR QUEER TALES

Till morning found him come into a country
Where none his Bad Face knew.

Past Mountain, River, Forest, River, Mountain —
That Thief's lean shanks sped on,
Till Evening found him knocking at a Dark House,
His breath now well-nigh gone.

There came a little maid and asked his business;
A Cobbler dwelt within;
And though she much disliked the Bag he carried,
She led the Bad Man in.

He bargained with the Cobbler for a lodging
And soft laid down his Sack —
In the Dead of Night, with none to spy or listen —
From off his weary back.

And he taught the little Chicks to call him Father,
And he sold his stolen Pelf,
And bought a Palace, Horses, Slaves, and Peacocks
To ease his wicked self.

And though the children never really loved him,
He was rich past all belief;
While Robin and his Dame o'er Delf and Pewter
Spent all their days in Grief.

SAM'S THREE WISHES; OR LIFE'S LITTLE WHIRLIGIG

"I'M thinking and thinking," said old Sam Shore,
"Twere somebody *knocking* I heard at the door."

From the clock popped the cuckoo and cuckooed
out eight,

As there in his chair he wondering sate . . .

"There's no one I knows on would come so late,

A-clicking the latch of an empty house

With nobbut inside 'un but me and a mouse. . . .

Maybe a-waking in sleep I be,

And 'twere out of a dream came that tapping to
me."

At length he cautiously rose, and went,

And with thumb upon latch awhile listening bent,

Then slowly drew open the door. And behold!

There stood a Fairy! — all green and gold,

Mantled up warm against dark and cold,

And smiling up into his candle shine,

Lips like wax, and cheeks like wine,

As saucy and winsome a thing to see

As are linden buds on a linden tree.

FOUR QUEER TALES

Stock-still in the doorway stood simple Sam,
A-ducking his head, with "Good-e'en to 'ee,
Ma'am."

Dame Fairy she nods, and cries clear and sweet,
"'Tis a *very* good-e'en, sir, when such folks meet.
I know thee, Sam, though thou wist not of me,
And I'm come in late gloaming to speak with thee;
Though my eyes do dazzle at glint of your rush,
All under this pretty green fuchsia bush."

Sam ducked once more, smiling simple and slow.
Like the warbling of birds her words did flow,
And she laughed, very merry, to see how true
Shone the old man's kindness his courtesy through.
And she nodded her head, and the stars on high
Sparkled down on her smallness from out of the
sky.

"A friend is a friend, Sam, and wonderful pleasant,
And I'm come for old sake's sake to bring thee a
present.

Three wishes, three wishes are thine, Sam Shore,
Just three wishes — and wish no more,
All for because, ruby-ripe to see,
The pixy-pears burn in yon hawthorn tree,
And your old milch cow, wheresoever she goes
Never crops over the fairy-knowes.
Ay, Sam, thou art old and thy house is lone,
But there's Potencies round thee, and here is one! "

SAM'S THREE WISHES

Poor Sam, he stared: and the stars o'erhead
A shimmering light on the elm-tops shed.
Like rilling of water her voice rang sweet,
And the night-wind sighed at the sound of it.
He frowned — glanced back at the empty grate,
And shook very slowly his grey old pate:
"Three wishes, my dear! Why, I scarcely knows
Which be my crany and which my toes!
But I thank 'ee, Ma'am, kindly, and this I'd say,
That the night of your passing is Michaelmas Day;
And if it were company come on a sudden,
Why, I'd ax for a fat goose to fry in the oven!"

And lo, and forsooth! as the words he was uttering,
A rich puff of air set his candle a-guttering,
And there rose in the kitchen a sizzling and
sputtering,
With a crackling of sparks and of flames a great
fluttering,
And — of which here could not be two opinions —
A smoking-hot savour of sage and onions.
Beam, wall and flagstones the kitchen was lit,
Every dark corner and cranny of it
With the blaze from the hearthstone. Copper and
brass
Winked back the winking of platter and glass.
And a wonderful squeaking of mice went up
At the smell of a Michaelmas supper to sup —
Unctuous odours that wreathed and swirled,
Where'er frisked a whisker or mouse-tail twirled,

FOUR QUEER TALES

While out of the chimney up into the night
That ne'er-to-be-snuffed-too-much smoke took flight.
"That's one," says the Fairy, finger on thumb,
"So now, Mister Sam, there's but two to come! "
She leaned her head sidelong; she lifted her chin,
With a twinkling of eye from the radiance within.
Poor Sam stood astounded; he says, says he,
"I *wish* my old Mother was back with me,
For if there was one thing she couldn't refuse
'Twas a sweet thick slice from the breast of a
goose."

But his cheek grew stiff and his eyes stared bright,
For there, on her stick, pushing out of the night,
Tap-tapping along, herself and no other,
Came who but the shape of his dear old Mother!
Straight into the kitchen she hastened and went,
Her breath coming quick as if all but spent.
"Why, Sam," says she, "the bird be turning,
For my nose tells I that the skin's a-burning! "
And down at the oven the ghost of her sat
And basted the goose with the boiling fat.
"Oho," cries the Fairy, sweet and small,
"Another wish gone will leave nothing at all."
And Sam sighs, "Bless 'ee, Ma'am, keep the other,
There's nowt that I want now I have my Mother."
But the Fairy laughs softly, and says, says she,
"There's one wish left, Sam, I promised 'ee three.
Hasten your wits, the hour creeps on,
There's calling afield and I'm soon to be gone."

SAM'S THREE WISHES

Soon as haps midnight the cocks will crow
And me to the gathering and feasting must go."

Sam gazed at his Mother — withered and wan,
The rose in her cheek, her bright hair, gone,
And her poor old back bent double with years —
And he scarce could speak for the salt, salt tears.
" Well, well," he says, " I'm unspeakable glad:
But — it bain't quite the same as when I was a lad.
There's joy and there's joy, Ma'am, but to tell 'ee
the truth

There's none can compare with the joy of one's
youth.

And if it was possible, how could I choose
But be back in boy's breeches to eat the goose;
And all the old things — and my Mother the most,
To shine again real as my own gatepost.
What wouldn't I give, too, to see again wag
The dumpity tail of my old dog, Shag!
Your kindness, Ma'am, but all wishing was vain
Unless us can both be young again."
A shrill, faint laughter from nowhere came . . .
Empty the dark in the candle-flame. . . .

And there stood our Sam, about four foot high,
Snub nose, shock hair, and round blue eye.
Breeches and braces and coat of him too,
Shirt on his back, and each clodhopping shoe
Had shrunk to a nicety — button and hem
To fit the small Sammie tucked up into them.

FOUR QUEER TALES

There was his Mother, too; smooth, dear cheek,
Lips as smooth as a blackbird's beak,
Pretty arched eyebrows, the daintiest nose —
While the smoke of the baking deliciously rose.

"Come, Sammie," she cries, "your old Mammikin's
joy,

Climb up on your stool, supper's ready, my boy.
Bring in the candle, and shut out the night;
There's goose, baked taties and cabbage to bite.
Why, bless the wee lamb, he's all shiver and shake,
And you'd think from the look of him scarcely
awake!

If 'ee glour wi' those eyes, Sam, so dark and round,
The elves will away with 'ee, I'll be bound!"
So Sam and his Mother by wishes three
Were made just as happy as happy can be.
And there — with a bumpity tail to wag —
Sat laughing, with tongue out, their old dog, Shag.
To clatter of patter, bones, giblets and juice,
Between them they ate up the whole of the goose.

But time is a river for ever in flow,
The weeks went by as the weeks must go.
Soon fifty-two to a year did grow.
The long years passed, one after another,
Making older and older our Sam and his Mother;
And, alas and alack, with nine of them gone,
Poor Shag lay asleep again under a stone.
And a sorrowful dread would sometimes creep

SAM'S THREE WISHES

Into Sam's dreams, as he lay asleep,
That his Mother was lost, and away he'd fare,
Calling her, calling her, everywhere,
In dark, in rain, by roads unknown,
Under echoing hills, and alone, alone.
What bliss in the morning to wake and see
The sun shining green in the linden tree,
And out of that dream's dark shadowiness
To slip in on his Mother and give her a kiss,
And go whistling off in the dew to hear
The thrushes all mocking him, sweet and clear.

Still, moon after moon from heaven above
Shone on Mother and son, and made light of love.
Her roses faded, her pretty brown hair
Had sorrowful grey in it everywhere.
And at last she died, and was laid to rest,
Her tired hands crossed on her shrunken breast.
And Sam, now lonely, lived on and on
Till most of his workaday life seemed gone.

Yet spring came again with its green and blue,
And presently summer's wild roses too,
Pinks, Sweet William, and sops-in-wine,
Blackberry, lavender, eglantine.
And when these had blossomed and gone their way,
'Twas apples, and daisies and Michaelmas Day —
Yes, spider-webs, dew, and haws in the may,
And seraphs singing in Michaelmas Day.

FOUR QUEER TALES

Sam worked all morning and *couldn't* get rest
For a kind of a feeling of grief in his breast.
And yet, not grief, but something more
Like the thought that what happens has happened
before.

He fed the chickens, he fed the sow,
On a three-legged stool sate down to the cow,
With a pail 'twixt his legs in the green in the
meadow,
Under the elm trees' lengthening shadow;
And woke at last with a smile and a sigh
To find he had milked his poor Jingo dry.

As dusk set in, even the birds did seem
To be calling and calling from out of a dream.
He chopped up kindling, shut up his shed,
In a bucket of well-water soused his head
To freshen his eyes up a little and make
The drowsy old wits of him wider awake.
As neat as a womanless creature is able
He swept up his hearthstone and laid the table.
And then o'er his platter and mug, if you please,
Sate gloomily gooming at loaf and cheese —
Gooming and gooming as if the mere sight
Of his victuals could satisfy appetite!
And the longer and longer he looked at them
The slimmer slimmed upward his candle flame,

Blue in the air. And when squeaked a mouse
'Twas loud as a trump in the hush of the house.

SAM'S THREE WISHES

Then, sudden, a soft little wind puffed by,
'Twixt the thick-thatched roof and the star-sown
sky;
And died. And then
That deep, dead, wonderful silence again.

Then — soft as a rattle a-counting her seeds
In the midst of a tangle of withered-up weeds —
Came a faint, faint knocking, a rustle like silk,
And a breath at the keyhole as soft as milk —
Still as the flit of a moth. And then . . .
That infinitesimal knocking again.

Sam lifted his chin from his fists. He listened.
His wandering eyes in the candle glistened.
Then slowly, slowly, rolled round by degrees —
And there sat a mouse on the top of his cheese.
He stared at this Midget, and it at him,
Over the edge of his mug's round rim,
And — as if it were Christian — he says, "Did 'ee
hear

A faint little tap-tap-tap-tapping, my dear?
You was at supper and me in a maze,
'Tis dark for a caller in these lone days,
There's nowt in the larder. We're both of us old.
And all of my loved ones sleep under the mould,
And yet — and yet — as I've told 'ee before . . . "

*But if Sam's story you'd read to the end,
Turn back to page 1, and press onward, dear friend;*

FOUR QUEER TALES

*Yes, if you would stave the last note of this song,
Turn back to page primus, and warble along!
For all sober records of life (come to write 'em),
Are bound to continue — well — ad infinitum!*

PLACES AND PEOPLE

A WIDOW'S WEEDS

A POOR old widow in her weeds
Sowed her garden with wild-flower seeds;
Not too shallow, and not too deep,
And down came April — drip — drip — drip.
Up shone May, like gold, and soon
Green as an arbour grew leafy June.
And now all summer she sits and sews
Where willow herb, comfrey, bugloss blows,
Teasle and tansy, meadowsweet,
Campion, toadflax, and rough hawksbit;
Brown bee orchis, and Peals of Bells;
Clover, burnet, and thyme she smells;
Like Oberon's meadows her garden is
Drowsy from dawn till dusk with bees.
Weeps she never, but sometimes sighs,
And peeps at her garden with bright brown eyes;
And all she has is all she needs —
A poor old Widow in her weeds.

“SOOEET!”

BLACK as a chimney is his face,
And ivory white his teeth,
And in his brass-bound cart he rides,
The chestnut blooms beneath.

“Sooeep, Sooeep!” he cries, and brightly peers
This way and that, to see
With his two light-blue shining eyes
What custom there may be.

And once inside the house, he'll squat,
And drive his rods on high,
Till twirls his sudden sooty brush
Against the morning sky.

Then 'mid his bulging bags of soot,
With half the world asleep,
His small cart wheels him off again,
Still hoarsely bawling, **“Sooeep!”**

MRS. MACQUEEN

(OR THE LOLLIE-SHOP)

WITH glass like a bull's eye,
And shutters of green,
Down on the cobbles
Lives Mrs. MacQueen.

At six she rises;
At nine you see
Her candle shine out
In the linden tree:

And at half-past nine
Not a sound is nigh,
But the bright moon creeping
Across the sky;

Or a far dog baying;
Or a twittering bird
In its drowsy nest,
In the darkness stirred;

Or like the roar
Of a distant sea
A long-drawn S-s-sh!
In the linden tree.

THE LITTLE GREEN ORCHARD

SOME one is always sitting there,
In the little green orchard;
Even when the sun is high
In noon's unclouded sky,
And faintly droning goes
The bee from rose to rose,
Some one in shadow is sitting there,
In the little green orchard.

Yes, and when twilight is falling softly
In the little green orchard;
When the grey dew distils
And every flower-cup fills;
When the last blackbird says,
"What — what!" and goes her way — s-sh!
I have heard voices calling softly
In the little green orchard.

Not that I am afraid of being there,
In the little green orchard;
Why, when the moon's been bright,
Shedding her lonesome light,
And moths like ghosties come,

THE LITTLE GREEN ORCHARD

And the horned snail leaves home:
I've sat there, whispering and listening there,
In the little green orchard.

Only it's strange to be feeling there,
In the little green orchard;
Whether you paint or draw,
Dig, hammer, chop, or saw;
When you are most alone,
All but the silence gone . . .
Some one is waiting and watching there,
In the little green orchard.

POOR "MISS 7"

LONE and alone she lies,
Poor Miss 7,
Five steep flights from the earth,
And one from heaven;
Dark hair and dark brown eyes,—
Not to be sad she tries,
Still — still it's lonely lies
Poor Miss 7.

One day-long watch hath she,
Poor Miss 7,
Not in some orchard sweet
In April Devon,—
Just four blank walls to see,
And dark come shadowily,
No moon, no stars, ah me!
Poor Miss 7.

And then to wake again,
Poor Miss 7,
To the cold night, to have
Sour physic given;
Out of some dream of pain,
Then strive long hours in vain

POOR "MISS 7"

**Deep dreamless sleep to gain:
Poor Miss 7.**

**Yet memory softly sings
Poor Miss 7
Songs full of love and peace
And gladness even;
Clear flowers and tiny wings,
All tender, lovely things,
Hope to her bosom brings —
Happy Miss 7.**

SAM

WHEN Sam goes back in memory,
It is to where the sea
Breaks on the shingle, emerald-green,
In white foam, endlessly;
He says — with small brown eye on mine —
“ I used to keep awake,
And lean from my window in the moon,
Watching those billows break.
And half a million tiny hands,
And eyes, like sparks of frost,
Would dance and come tumbling into the moon,
On every breaker tossed.
And all across from star to star,
I’ve seen the watery sea,
With not a single ship in sight,
Just ocean there, and me;
And heard my father snore. And once,
As sure as I’m alive,
Out of those wallowing, moon-flecked waves
I saw a mermaid dive;
Head and shoulders above the wave,
Plain as I now see you,
Combing her hair, now back, now front,
Her two eyes peeping through;

SAM

Calling me, 'Sam!'—quietlike—'Sam!' . . .

But me . . . I never went,
Making believe I kind of thought
'Twas some one else she meant . . .

Wonderful lovely there she sat,
Singing the night away,
All in the solitudinous sea
Of that there lonely bay.

"P'raps," and he'd smooth his hairless mouth,

"P'raps, if 'twere now, my son,
P'raps, if I heard a voice say, 'Sam!' . . .
Morning would find me gone."

ANDY BATTLE

ONCE and there was a young sailor, yeo ho!
And he sailed out over the sea
For the isles where pink coral and palm branches
blow,
And the fire-flies turn night into day,
Yeo ho!
And the fire-flies turn night into day.

But the *Dolphin* went down in a tempest, yeo ho!
 And with three forsook sailors ashore,
 The *Portingales* took him where sugar-canes grow,
 Their slave for to be evermore,
Yeo ho!
 Their slave for to be evermore.

With his musket for mother and brother, yeo ho!
 He warred with the Cannibals drear,
 In forests where panthers pad soft to and fro,
 And the *Pongo* shakes noonday with fear,
Yeo ho!
 And the *Pongo* shakes noonday with fear.

Now lean with long travail, all wasted with woe,
With a monkey for messmate and friend,

ANDY BATTLE

He sits 'neath the *Cross* in the cankering snow,
And waits for his sorrowful end,
Yeo ho!
And waits for his sorrowful end.

THE OLD SOLDIER

THERE came an Old Soldier to my door,
Asked a crust, and asked no more;
The wars had thinned him very bare,
Fighting and marching everywhere,
With a Fol rol dol rol di do.

With nose stuck out, and cheek sunk in,
A bristling beard upon his chin —
Powder and bullets and wounds and drums
Had come to that Soldier as suchlike comes —
With a Fol rol dol rol di do.

'Twas sweet and fresh with buds of May,
Flowers springing from every spray;
And when he had supped the Old Soldier trolled
The song of youth that never grows old,
Called Fol rol dol rol di do.

Most of him rags, and all of him lean,
And the belt round his belly drawn tightsome in,
He lifted his peaked old grizzled head,
And these were the very same words he said —
A Fol-rol-dol-rol-di-do.

THE PICTURE

HERE is a sea-legged sailor,
Come to this tottering Inn,
Just when the bronze on its signboard is fading,
And the black shades of evening begin.

With his head on thick paws sleeps a sheep-dog,
There stoops the Shepherd, and see,
All follow-my-leader the ducks waddle homeward,
Under the sycamore tree.

Very brown is the face of the Sailor,
His bundle is crimson, and green
Are the thick leafy boughs that hang dense o'er the
Tavern,
And blue the far meadows between.

But the Crust, Ale, and Cheese of the Sailor,
His Mug and his platter of Delf,
And the crescent to light home the Shepherd and
Sheep-dog
The painter has kept to himself.

THE LITTLE OLD CUPID

'TWAS a very small garden;
The paths were of stone,
Scattered with leaves,
With moss overgrown;
And a little old Cupid
Stood under a tree;
With a small broken bow
He stood aiming at me.

The dog-rose in briars
Hung over the weeds,
The air was aflock
With the floating of seeds;
And a little old Cupid
Stood under a tree;
With a small broken bow
He stood aiming at me.

The dovecote was tumbling,
The fountain dry,
A wind in the orchard
Went whispering by;
And a little old Cupid
Stood under a tree;
With a small broken bow
He stood aiming at me.

KING DAVID

KING DAVID was a sorrowful man:
No cause for his sorrow had he;
And he called for the music of a hundred harps,
To ease his melancholy.

They played till they all fell silent:
Played — and play sweet did they;
But the sorrow that haunted the heart of King
David
They could not charm away.

He rose; and in his garden
Walked by the moon alone,
A nightingale hidden in a cypress-tree
Jargoned on and on.

King David lifted his sad eyes
Into the dark-boughed tree —
“Tell me, thou little bird that singest,
Who taught my grief to thee?”

But the bird in no wise heeded;
And the king in the cool of the moon
Hearkened to the nightingale's sorrowfulness,
Till all his own was gone.

THE OLD HOUSE

A VERY, very old house I know —
And ever so many people go,
Past the small lodge, forlorn and still,
Under the heavy branches, till
Comes the blank wall, and there's the door.
Go in they do; come out no more.
No voice says aught; no spark of light
Across that threshold cheers the sight;
Only the evening star on high
Less lonely makes a lonely sky,
As, one by one, the people go
Into that very old house I know.

BEASTS

UNSTOOPING

LOW on his fours the Lion
Treads with the surly Bear;
But Men straight upward from the dust
Walk with their heads in air;
The free sweet winds of heaven,
The sunlight from on high
Beat on their clear bright cheeks and brows
As they go striding by;
The doors of all their houses
They arch so they may go,
Uplifted o'er the four-foot beasts,
Unstooping, to and fro.

ALL BUT BLIND

All but blind
In his chambered hole
Gropes for worms
The four-clawed Mole.

All but blind
In the evening sky
The hooded Bat
Twirls softly by.

All but blind
In the burning day
The Barn-Owl blunders
On her way.

And blind as are
These three to me,
So, blind to Some-one
I must be.

NICHOLAS NYE

THISTLE and darnell and dock grew there,
And a bush, in the corner, of may,
On the orchard wall I used to sprawl
In the blazing heat of the day;
Half asleep and half awake,
While the birds went twittering by,
And nobody there my lone to share
But Nicholas Nye.

Nicholas Nye was lean and grey,
Lame of a leg and old,
More than a score of donkey's years
He had seen since he was foaled;
He munched the thistles, purple and spiked,
Would sometimes stoop and sigh,
And turn to his head, as if he said,
"Poor Nicholas Nye!"

Alone with his shadow he'd drowse in the meadow,
Lazily swinging his tail,
At break of day he used to bray,—
Not much too hearty and hale;
But a wonderful gumption was under his skin,
And a clear calm light in his eye,

BEASTS

And once in a while: he'd smile: —
Would Nicholas Nye.

Seem to be smiling at me, he would,
From his bush in the corner, of may,—
Bony and ownerless, widowed and worn,
Knobble-kneed, lonely and grey;
And over the grass would seem to pass
'Neath the deep dark blue of the sky,
Something much better than words between me
And Nicholas Nye.

But dusk would come in the apple boughs,
The green of the glow-worm shine,
The birds in nest would crouch to rest,
And home I'd trudge to mine;
And there, in the moonlight, dark with dew,
Asking not wherefore nor why,
Would brood like a ghost, and as still as a post,
Old Nicholas Nye.

THE PIGS AND THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

THE old Pig said to the little pigs,
"In the forest is truffles and mast,
Follow me then, all ye little pigs,
Follow me fast!"

The Charcoal-burner sat in the shade
With his chin on his thumb,
And saw the big Pig and the little pigs,
Chuffing come.

He watched 'neath a green and giant bough,
And the pigs in the ground
Made a wonderful grisling and gruzzling
And greedy sound.

And when, full-fed, they were gone, and Night
Walked her starry ways,
He stared with his cheeks in his hands
At his sullen blaze.

FIVE EYES

IN Hans' old Mill his three black cats
Watch the bins for the thieving rats.
Whisker and claw, they crouch in the night,
Their five eyes smouldering green and bright:
Squeaks from the flour sacks, squeaks from where
The cold wind stirs on the empty stair,
Squeaking and scampering, everywhere.
Then down they pounce, now in, now out,
At whisking tail, and sniffing snout;
While lean old Hans he snores away
Till peep of light at break of day;
Then up he climbs to his creaking mill,
Out come his cats all grey with meal —
Jekkel, and Jessup, and one-eyed Jill.

GRIM

BESIDE the blaze of forty fires
Giant Grim doth sit,
Roasting a thick-wooled mountain sheep
Upon an iron spit.
Above him wheels the winter sky,
Beneath him, fathoms deep,
Lies hidden in the valley mists
A village fast asleep —
Save for one restive hungry dog
That, snuffing towards the height,
Smells Grim's broiled supper-meat, and spies
His watch-fire twinkling bright.

SUMMER EVENING

THE sandy cat by the Farmer's chair
Mews at his knee for dainty fare;
Old Rover in his moss-greened house
Mumbles a bone, and barks at a mouse;
In the dewy fields the cattle lie
Chewing the cud 'neath a fading sky;
Dobbin at manger pulls his hay:
Gone is another summer's day.

EARTH FOLK

THE cat she walks on padded claws,
The wolf on the hills lays stealthy paws,
Feathered birds in the rain-sweet sky
At their ease in the air, flit low, flit high.

The oak's blind, tender roots pierce deep,
His green crest towers, dimmed in sleep,
Under the stars whose thrones are set
Where never prince hath journeyed yet.

WITCHES AND FAIRIES

AT THE KEYHOLE

"GRILL me some bones," said the Cobbler,
 "Some bones, my pretty Sue;
I'm tired of my lonesome with heels and soles,
 Springsides and uppers too;
A mouse in the wainscot is nibbling;
 A wind in the keyhole drones;
And a sheet webbed over my candle, Susie,
 Grill me some bones! "

"Grill me some bones," said the Cobbler,
 "I sat at my tic-tac-to;
And a footstep came to my door and stopped,
 And a hand groped to and fro;
And I peered up over my boot and last;
 And my feet went cold as stones: —
I saw an eye at the keyhole, Susie! —
 Grill me some bones! "

THE OLD STONE HOUSE

NOTHING on the grey roof, nothing on the
brown,
Only a little greening where the rain drips down;
Nobody at the window, nobody at the door,
Only a little hollow which a foot once wore;
But still I tread on tiptoe, still tiptoe on I go,
Past nettles, porch, and weedy well, for oh, I know
A friendless face is peering, and a clear still eye
Peeps closely through the casement as my step goes
by.

THE RUIN

WHEN the last colours of the day
Have from their burning ebbd away,
About that ruin, cold and lone,
The cricket shrills from stone to stone;
And scattering o'er its darkened green,
Bands of the fairies may be seen,
Chattering like grasshoppers, their feet
Dancing a thistledown dance round it:
While the great gold of the mild moon
Tinges their tiny acorn shoon.

THE RIDE-BY-NIGHTS

UP on their brooms the Witches stream,
Crooked and black in the crescent's gleam;
One foot high, and one foot low,
Bearded, cloaked, and cowed, they go.
'Neath Charlie's Wane they twitter and tweet,
And away they swarm 'neath the Dragon's feet.
With a whoop and a flutter they swing and sway,
And surge pell-mell down the Milky Way.
Betwixt the legs of the glittering Chair
They hover and squeak in the empty air.
Then round they swoop past the glimmering Lion
To where Sirius barks behind huge Orion;
Up, then, and over to wheel amain,
Under the silver, and home again.

PEAK AND PUKE

FROM his cradle in the glamourie
They have stolen my wee brother,
Roused a changeling in his swaddlings
For to fret mine own poor mother.
Pules it in the candle light
Wi' a cheek so lean and white,
Chinkling up its eyne so wee,
Wailing shrill at her an' me.
It we'll neither rock nor tend
Till the Silent Silent send,
Lapping in their waesome arms
Him they stole with spells and charms,
Till they take this changeling creature
Back to its own fairy nature —
Cry! Cry! as long as may be,
Ye shall ne'er be woman's baby!

THE CHANGELING

“**AHOY**, and ahoy!”

Twixt mocking and merry —

“Ahoy and ahoy, there,
Young man of the ferry!”

She stood on the steps

In the watery gloom —

That Changeling — “Ahoy, there!”

She called him to come.

He came on the green wave,

He came on the grey,

Where stooped that sweet lady

That still summer’s day.

He fell in a dream

Of her beautiful face,

As she sat on the thwart

And smiled in her place.

No echo his oar woke,

Float silent did they,

Past low-grazing cattle

In the sweet of the hay.

And still in a dream

At her beauty sat he,

Drifting stern foremost

Down — down to the sea.

THE CHANGELING

Come you, then: call,
 When the twilight apace
Brings shadow to brood
 On the loveliest face;
You shall hear o'er the water
 Ring faint in the grey —
“ Ahoy, and ahoy, there! ”
 And tremble away;
“ Ahoy, and ahoy! . . . ”
 And tremble away.

THE MOCKING FAIRY

"WON'T you look out of your window, Mrs. Gill? "

Quoth the Fairy, nidding, nodding in the garden;
"Can't you look out of your window, Mrs. Gill? "

Quoth the Fairy, laughing softly in the garden;
But the air was still, the cherry boughs were still,
And the ivy-tod 'neath the empty sill,
And never from her window looked out Mrs. Gill
On the Fairy shrilly mocking in the garden.

"What have they done with you, you poor Mrs. Gill? "

Quoth the Fairy, brightly glancing in the garden;
"Where have they hidden you, you poor old Mrs. Gill? "

Quoth the Fairy dancing lightly in the garden;
But night's faint veil now wrapped the hill,
Stark 'neath the stars stood the dead-still Mill,
And out of her cold cottage never answered Mrs. Gill

The Fairy mimbling mambling in the garden.

BEWITCHED

I HAVE heard a lady this night,
Lissom and jimp and slim,
Calling me — calling me over the heather,
'Neath the beech boughs dusk and dim.

I have followed a lady this night,
Followed her far and lone,
Fox and adder and weasel know
The ways that we have gone.

I sit at my supper 'mid honest faces,
And crumble my crust and say
Nought in the long-drawn drawl of the voices
Talking the hours away.

I'll go to my chamber under the gable,
And the moon will lift her light
In at my lattice from over the moorland
Hollow and still and bright.

And I know she will shine on a lady of witchcraft,
Gladness and grief to see,
Who has taken my heart with her nimble fingers,
Calls in my dreams to me:

WITCHES AND FAIRIES

Who has led me a dance by dell and dingle
My human soul to win,
Made me a changeling to my own, own mother,
A stranger to my kin.

THE HONEY ROBBERS

THERE were two Fairies, Gimmul and Mel,
Loved Earth's Man honey passing well;
Oft at the hives of his tame bees
They would their sugary thirst appease.
When even began to darken to night,
They would hie along in the fading light,
With elf-locked hair and scarlet lips,
And small stone knives to slit the skeps,
So softly not a bee inside
Should hear the woven straw divide.
And then with sly and greedy thumbs
Would rifle the sweet honeycombs.
And drowsily drone to drone would say,
"A cold, cold wind blows in this way";
And the great Queen would turn her head
From face to face, astonished,
And, though her maids with comb and brush
Would comb and soothe and whisper, "Hush!"
About the hive would shrilly go
A keening — keening, to and fro;
At which those robbers 'neath the trees
Would taunt and mock the honey-bees,
And through their sticky teeth would buzz
Just as an angry hornet does.

WITCHES AND FAIRIES

And when this Gimmul and this Mel
Had munched and sucked and swilled their fill,
Or ever Man's first cock could crow
Back to their Faërie Mounds they'd go.
Edging across the twilight air,
Thieves of a guise remotely fair.

LONGLEGS

LONGLEGS — he yelled “Coo-ee!”

And all across the combe
Shrill and shrill it rang — rang through
The clear green gloom.
Fairies there were a-spinning,
And a white tree-maid
Lifted her eyes, and listened
In her rain-sweet glade.
Bunnie to bunnie stamped; old Wat
Chin-deep in bracken sate;
A throstle piped, “I’m by, I’m by!”
Clear to his timid mate.
And there was Longlegs straddling,
And hearkening was he,
To distant Echo thrilling back
A thin “Coo-ee!”

MELMILLO

THREE and thirty birds there stood
In an elder in a wood;
Called Melmillo — flew off three,
Leaving thirty in a tree;
Called Melmillo — nine now gone,
And the boughs held twenty-one;
Called Melmillo — eighteen
Left but three to nod and preen;
Called Melmillo — three — two — one —
Now of birds were feathers none.

Then stole slim Melmillo in
To that wood all dusk and green,
And with lean long palms outspread
Softly a strange dance did tread;
Not a note of music she
Had for echoing company;
All the birds were flown to rest
In the hollow of her breast;
In the wood thorn, elder, willow —
Danced alone — lone danced Melmillo.

EARTH AND AIR

TREES

OF all the trees in England,
Her sweet three corners in,
Only the Ash, the bonnie Ash
Burns fierce while it is green.

Of all the trees in England,
From sea to sea again,
The Willow loveliest stoops her boughs
Beneath the driving rain.

Of all the trees in England,
Past frankincense and myrrh,
There's none for smell, of bloom and smoke,
Like Lime and Juniper.

Of all the trees in England,
Oak, Elder, Elm and Thorn,
The Yew alone burns lamps of peace
For them that lie forlorn.

SILVER

SLOWLY, silently, now the moon
Walks the night in her silver shoon;
This way, and that, she peers, and sees
Silver fruit upon silver trees;
One by one the casements catch
Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
Couched in his kennel, like a log,
With paws of silver sleeps the dog;
From their shadowy coat the white breasts peep
Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep;
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
With silver claws, and silver eye;
And moveless fish in the water gleam,
By silver reeds in a silver stream.

NOBODY KNOWS

OFTEN I've heard the Wind sigh
By the ivied orchard wall,
Over the leaves in the dark night,
Breathe a sighing call,
And faint away in the silence,
While I, in my bed,
Wondered, 'twixt dreaming and waking,
What it said.

Nobody knows what the wind is,
Under the height of the sky,
Where the hosts of the stars keep far away house
And its wave sweeps by —
Just a great wave of the air,
Tossing the leaves in its sea,
And foaming under the eaves of the roof
That covers me.

And so we live under deep water,
All of us, beasts and men,
And our bodies are buried down under the sand,
When we go again;
And leave, like the fishes, our shells,
And float on the Wind and away,
To where, o'er the marvellous tides of the air,
Burns day.

WANDERERS

WIDE are the meadows of night,
And daisies are shining there,
Tossing their lovely dew,
Lustrous and fair;
And through these sweet fields go,
Wanderers amid the stars —
Venus, Mercury, Uranus, Neptune,
Saturn, Jupiter, Mars.

Tired in their silver, they move,
And circling, whisper and say,
Fair are the blossoming meads of delight
Through which we stray.

MANY A MICKLE

A LITTLE sound —

Only a little, a little —
The breath in a reed,
A trembling fiddle;
The trumpet's ring,
The shuddering drum;
So all the glory, bravery, hush
Of music come.

A little sound —

Only a stir and a sigh
Of each green leaf
Its fluttering neighbour by;
Oak on to oak,
The wide dark forest through —
So o'er the watery wheeling world
The night winds go.

A little sound,

Only a little, a little —
The thin high drone
Of the simmering kettle,
The gathering frost,
The click of needle and thread;
Mother, the fading wall, the dream,
The drowsy bed.

WILL EVER?

WILL he ever be weary of wandering,
The flaming sun?
Ever weary of waning in lovelight,
The white still moon?
Will ever a shepherd come
With a crook of simple gold,
And lead all the little stars
Like lambs to the fold?

Will ever the Wanderer sail
From over the sea,
Up the river of water,
To the stones to me?
Will he take us all into his ship,
Dreaming, and waft us far,
To where in the clouds of the West
The Islands are?

SONGS

THE SONG OF THE SECRET

WHERE is beauty?

Gone, gone:

The cold winds have taken it

With their faint moan;

The white stars have shaken it,

Trembling down,

Into the pathless deeps of the sea:

Gone, gone

Is beauty from me.

The clear nakèd flower

Is faded and dead;

The green-leafed willow,

Drooping her head,

Whispers low to the shade

Of her boughs in the stream,

Sighing a beauty,

Secret as dream.

THE SONG OF SOLDIERS

AS I sat musing by the frozen dyke,
There was one man marching with a bright steel
pike,
Marching in the dayshine like a ghost came he,
And behind me was the moaning and the murmur
of the sea.

As I sat musing, 'twas not one but ten —
Rank on rank of ghostly soldiers marching o'er the
fen,
Marching in the misty air they showed in dreams
to me,
And behind me was the shouting and the shattering
of the sea.

As I sat musing, 'twas a host in dark array,
With their horses and their cannon wheeling on-
ward to the fray,
Moving like a shadow to the fate the brave must
dree,
And behind me roared the drums, rang the trum-
pets of the sea.

THE BEES' SONG

THOUZANDZ of thornz there be
On the Rozex where gozez
The Zebra of Zee:
Sleek, striped, and hairy,
The steed of the Fairy
Princess of Zee.

Heavy with blozzomz be
The Rozex that growzez
In the thickets of Zee,
Where grazez the Zebra,
Marked Abracadeccebra
Of the Princess of Zee.

And he nozez the poziez
Of the Rozex that growzez
So luvex'm and free,
With an eye, dark and wary,
In search of a Fairy,

Whose Rozex he knowzez
Were not honeyed for he,
But to breathe a sweet incense
To solace the Princess
Of far-away Zee.

A SONG OF ENCHANTMENT

A SONG of Enchantment I sang me there,
In a green-green wood, by waters fair,
Just as the words came up to me
I sang it under the wild wood tree.

Widdershins turned I singing it low,
Watching the wild birds come and go;
No cloud in the deep dark blue to be seen
Under the thick-thatched branches green.

Twilight came; silence came;
The planet of Evening's silver flame;
By darkening paths I wandered through
Thickets trembling with drops of dew.

But the music is lost and the words are gone
Of the song I sang as I sat alone,
Ages and ages have fallen on me —
On the wood and the pool and the elder tree.

DREAM-SONG

SUNLIGHT, moonlight,
Twilight, starlight —
Gloaming at the close of day,
And an owl calling,
Cool dews falling
In a wood of oak and may.

Lantern-light, taper-light,
Torchlight, no-light:
Darkness at the shut of day,
And lions roaring,
Their wrath pouring
In wild waste places far away.

Elf-light, bat-light,
Touchwood-light and toad-light,
And the sea a shimmering gloom of grey,
And a small face smiling
In a dream's beguiling
In a world of wonders far away.

THE SONG OF SHADOWS

SWEEP thy faint strings, Musician,
With thy long lean hand;
Downward the starry tapers burn,
Sinks soft the waning sand;
The old hound whimpers couched in sleep,
The embers smoulder low;
Across the walls the shadows
Come, and go.

Sweep softly thy strings, Musician,
The minutes mount to hours;
Frost on the windless casement weaves
A labyrinth of flowers;
Ghosts linger in the darkening air,
Hearken at the open door;
Music hath called them, dreaming,
Home once more.

